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OTHER HANDS

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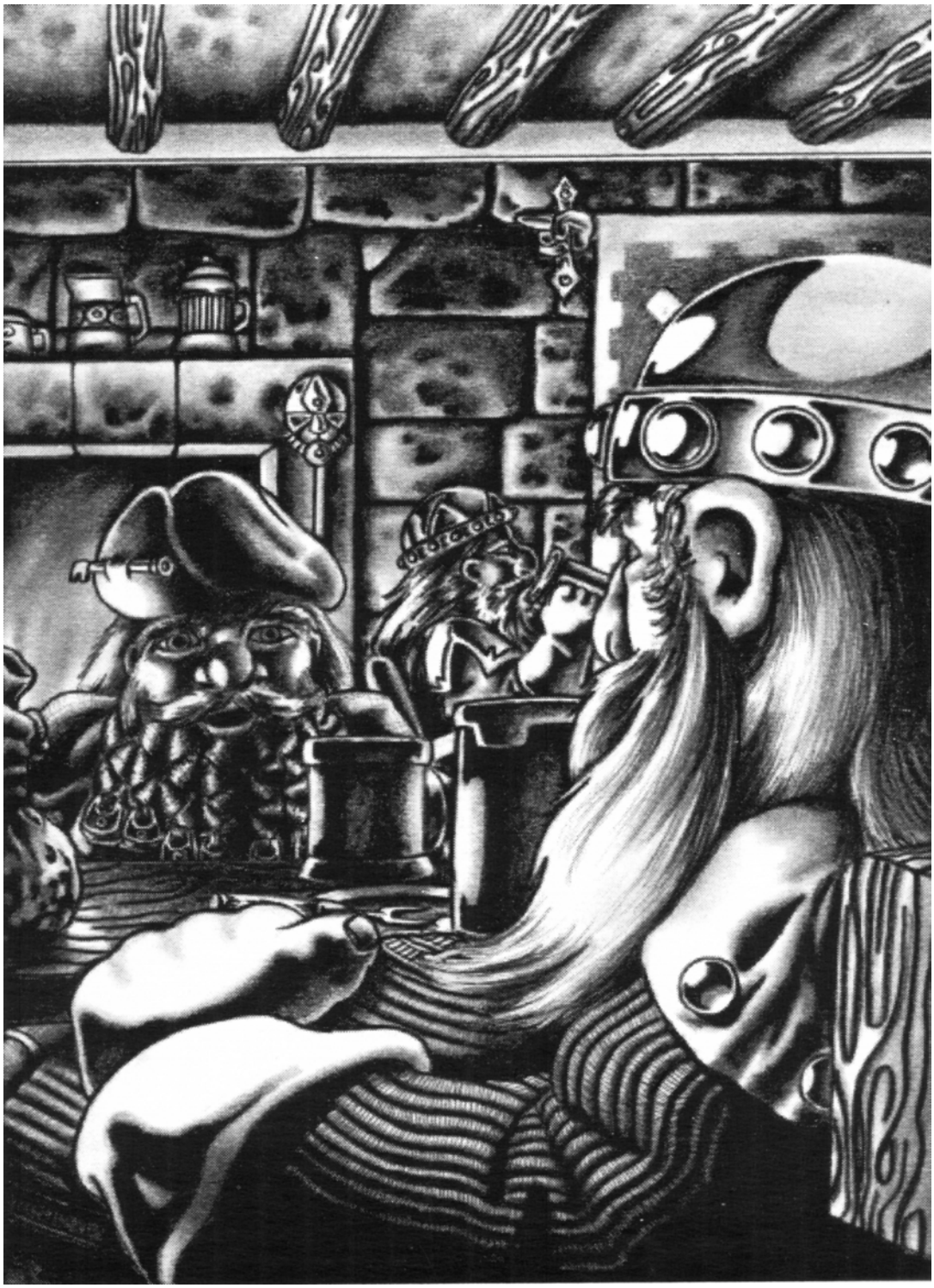

DWARVES OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

ISSUE 25
APRIL 1999

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NEXT ISSUE
DARK UNDEAD

EDITORIAL: MYTHOPOETIC JUSTICE

I must have given Jeff Erwin a bad conscience for failing to surrender his "Dwarves of the Blue Mountains" essay last issue. Not only has he produced the promised goods this time round, he has virtually written the entire issue!

Who is Jeff Erwin? He is Mr. Lindon realm module guy, who continues to labor away at his Elven *magnum opus* which will someday become available to us all. Jeff's first contribution to OH appeared in Issue 20 with his intriguing thesis about the geographical relationship between Lindon and England. Now he returns with a much needed housecleaning article about the Dwarves who inhabit Lindon's borders.

Jeff took on this topic as a favor to me, to help work out some of the necessary background material for the Blue Mountain Dwarves who will be appearing in ICE's *Dwarven Company* adventure kit. One important element in that background is the Ring of the Firebeards, specific details of whose history had to be devised. The result is the "The Tale of Dwari and Kúra," a piece of Middle-earth fiction that recounts the events surrounding the acquisition of two of the seven Dwarven rings in the Second Age. Jeff penned another tale telling concerning the fate of the Ring of the Broadbeams, but due to limitations of space that has been posted on the OH website.

Jeffs final contribution for this issue is the second installment of our Mithril miniatures column. Consistent with his interest in Lindon, Jeff has chosen to focus on the Gilgalad, Elrond and Círdan figures from the Last Alliance series (M269-M278).

And of course, Bridget Buxton rounds things off for us with the next episode of Rastarin's Log, in which Rastarin administers her own brand of poetic (or piratic) justice to those who have attempted to frame her for the murder of Sangahyandion. In the process she manages to destroy much of Mírlond and her own beloved ship, but at last the board is cleared for the quest for the Gwaedhel-blade and the final confrontation with Irusan.

The presence of two pieces of fiction in the same OH-and their taking up half the space of that issue-provides a fitting opportunity to reiterate my thoughts on the content guidelines of this journal. As discussed in Issue 21, the most important principle for the selection and arrangement of content should be *balance:* a balance between the practical and the theoretical, between game mechanics and story-telling. At present, we are in need of some practical material to counter-balance the essays and fiction which have dominated this year's issues thus far. (I would especially like to see a ready-to-run scenario next issue.)

But first, a few more words on fiction. Rastarin's Log has turned out to be longer than originally projected in Issue 21, but it *will* come to a conclusion. Bridget and I eventually agreed on ten episodes (so there are three more installments to come). Bridget and others have committed more than a hundred pages of our current Middle-earth campaign to writing, and I hope to post this on the website.

Rastarin got fairly high popularity marks in the subscriber survey, but with the 24-page/issue limitation now in effect, I am somewhat reticent about having personal campaign logs take up valuable space. If there is to be fiction in future issues, I would prefer it to be of the sort that Jeff has done here: stories that contribute important new information relevant to the history of Middle-earth as a whole.

And now for some news: two new *Other Hands* Supplements (maps of Númenor and the Inland Sea) are now available! See the back cover of this issue for details. ICE news: not much; however, all backlisted MERP modules have now all been catalogued and made available for purchase on ICE's website. Mithril news: Chris Tubb has confirmed via e-mail that the first of the new figures for '99 are now finished (though when exactly they are expected to be in the stores I don't know).

The OH website continues to be a magnet for MERP gamers. As of now we have gotten more than 6,000 hits! More importantly, our subscription base has at last passed the hundred mark (102 to be exact)!! This bodes well. If it stays above a hundred for another issue and continues to grow, I will be able to lower the subscription rate by ¢1/page-not a great amount, but that's already $1.00 less per year. (I will credit this to existing subscriptions as well, so that some of you may even get a whole issue added on; others will not have to pay as much for renewing.)

Chris Seeman 1 April, 1999

DWARVES OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

This essay and its attached tales are concerned with the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains, or Ered Luin, the peaks which separate Lindon from Eriador. The near absence of Blue Mountain Dwarves from the annaL) of LotR, and their peripheral stature tra The Silmarillion, can easily obscure the long history of Tolkien's development of them, from their emergence in The Book of Lost Tales *(where they were evil and thralls of Morgoth) to their heroic identity in* The Hobbit *The care and devotion Tolkien lavished on his Elven languages and histories was never quite so carefully applied to his stories about the Dwarves, and for that reason those stories have generated some of the great irreducible contradictions of Tolkien's legendarium. To some this situation may seem unfortunate, but I prefer to think of it as an opportunity for a fascinating study, and as a gift to purist and conventional reader alike.*

This historical essay found its germ in the ongoing Lindon realm module project I have been working on with Oliver Schick. The presence of Dwarves in the Blue Mountains bordering that realm necessitated a brief analysis. I was startled to find that the information about these Dwarves in both Tolkien and in the MERP series was confused and often contradictory. Chris Seeman encouraged me to bring some order to it all, and here I present the result: a Tale of Years, preceded by a detailed description of the sources and the process by which I reached interpretive decisions concerning them.

For clarity, I mark all characters and sites invented by ICE with an asterisk (*), except in quoted passages where the MERP source already is cited. Entries in the Tale of Years deriving either from Tolkien or from MERP are also cited; elements that I have added (indicated by italics) are cross-referenced with notes where further explanation of their contents is given.

SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

A:TL = *Arnor: The Land*

A:TP = *Arnor: The People*

Arnor = 1st edition *Arnor*

DG = *Dol Guldur*

Gaz = *Northwestern Middle-earth Gazetteer*

KS = *The Kin-strife*

LoMe = *Lords of Middle-earth*

LotR = *The Lord of the Rings*

LT = *The Book of Lost Tales*

Map Set = *Northwestern Middle-earth Map Set*

MERP[2] = 2nd edition MERP rulebook

NW = *The Northern Waste*

PoMe = *Peoples of Middle-earth*

RotB = *Rogues of the Borderlands*

Shire = *The Shire*

Sil = *The Silmarillion*

Tol = *The Treason of Isengard*

ToMe = *Treasures of Middle-earth*

UT = *Unfinished Tales*

WotJ = *War of the Jewels*

WHICH TRIBES WERE THEY?

In his late essay "Of Dwarves and Men" (c. 1969), Tolkien for the first time discloses the identity of the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains:

> In the Dwarvish traditions of the Third Age the names of the places where each of the Seven Ancestors had 'awakened' were remembered; but only two of them were known to Elves and Men of the West: the most westerly, the awakening place of the ancestors of the Firebeards and the Broadbeams, and that of the ancestor of the Longbeards, the eldest in making and awakening. The first had been in the north of the Ered Lindon, the great eastern wall of Beleriand, of which the Blue Mountains of the Second and later ages were the remnant; the second had been Mount Gundabad... (PoMe.301)

In a note to this paragraph, Christopher Tolkien remarks:

> Since the ancestors of the Firebeards and the Broadbeams awoke in the Ered Lindon, these kindreds must be presumed to be the Dwarves of Nogrod and Belegost. (PoMe.322)

While there is no reason to doubt this supposition, it remains unclear as to which of these two Dwarf-tribes is to be associated with Nogrod and which with Belegost. An arbitrary tribal identification of the Firebeards with Belegost and the Broadbeams with Nogrod was made in A:TL.54. There is no contrary evidence to dispute this decision.[1]

Earlier MERP modules, written prior to the publication of Tolkien's essay, shied away from giving the Blue Mountain Dwarves tribal names, but instead invented names for their ancestors: Dwálin for the folk of Belegost and Thrár for those of Nogrod (LoMe 111.42; RotB. 11; Arnor.211). So "Dwálin's folk" would be the Firebeards (in Sindarin, *Norfangrim* or *Belegostrim*) and "Thrár's folk" the Broadbeams (*Lanthondrim* or *Nogrodrim*).

WHERE DID THEIR ANCESTORS AWAKEN?

The Firebeards and Broadbeams are said to have come from the northern reaches of the Blue Mountains. Perhaps Mount Rerir is meant; but in any case the location was presumably still extant somewhere on the northern cape of Lindon following the cataclysm of the War of Wrath. One possible link might be to the "old dwarf-mines near the far end of the mountains" mentioned in Appendix A of LotR, where Arvedui hid. Chris Seeman suggested to me that this location be equated with the Nan-i-Naugrim, * the principal Dwarven settlement invented by the MERP modules for the northern Blue Mountains. An association of this site with the awakening of Dwálin and Thrár serves to explain the establishment of Dwarf-holds there in the Second Age.[2]

WHERE WERE NOGROD AND BELEGOST?

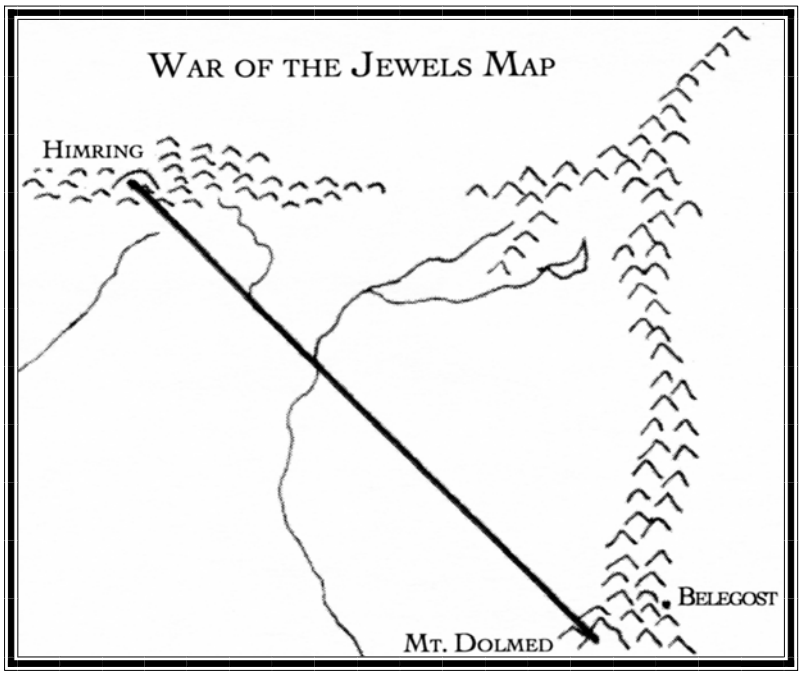
Pete Fenlon's maps of Lindon and Eriador do not indicate the location Nogrod or Belegost, the great Dwarf-cities of the Blue Mountains. This reticence may reflect the interpretation of Karen Wynn Fonstad's *Atlas of Middle-earth,* the 1st edition of which located the cities in the part of the Ered Lindon which collapsed into the Gulf of Lhûn in the War of Wrath. This is not true, as the text of Appendix B reveals: "Many Dwarves leaving their old cities in Ered Luin go to Moria and swell its numbers (LotR III.364)." Fonstad revised her view in the book's 2nd edition, placing Belegost alone and south of Nogrod in the midst of the southern Blue Mountains; a decision which contradicts the text of *The Silmarillion:*

> To the north of the great height of Mount Dolmed was Gabilgathol, which the Elves interpreted in their tongue Belegost, that is Mickleburg; and *southward* was delved Tumunzahar, by the Elves named Nogrod, the Hollowbold. (Sil.91; my emphasis)

It is worth noting that Tolkien's earlier maps of Middle-earth, drafted for LotR, had the same placement as in ToI.302; but this was left out of later versions. The map which became the final one for *The Silmarillion* predates the LotR, but there is substantial evidence that this earlier view of the relationship of Lindon to Beleriand was subsequently abandoned.

The basis for this hypothesis is the addition to the LotR map of the isle of Himring, which may have been made *after* the marking in of Belegost. Himring is a remnant of the hill of the same name from *The Silmarillion,* and the island's distance from the Ered Lindon corresponds to its position on *the Silmarillion* maps. Careful measurements show that the Dwarf-cities would lie exactly as Tolkien implies (PoMe.313; UT.235) in giving the Little Lune as their southern border in the Second Age, and giving their locale as "not far from Nenuial:" most likely a latitude with Lake Nenuial, if one assumes the shortest possible distance-*not* farther south, where the Gulf of Lhûn later lay.

This is best illustrated by the north-eastern sheet of the last map of Beleriand, where Mount Dolmed is found at the bottom of the line separating squares F14 and F15 (WotJ.183, 331). Himring is found in square D12, on a diagonal line from the cities. Each square measures 50 miles to a side, so the distance from Himring to Dolmed is a little less than 213 miles. On the map found in UT, this places Dolmed over 3/4ths of the way from the source of the River Lhûn to its Gulf. This is very close to the latitude of Nenuial.



The earlier MERP modules themselves placed the ruins of Nogrod and Belegost within the Nan-i-Naugrim* (RotB.14; Gaz.50; Arnor.211). This, however, contradicts Pete Fenlon's positioning of this vale in relation to his implied location of certain rivers in Lindon (Map Set.l), which place the Nan-i-Naugrim* some 35-40 miles north of Mount Dolmed. This discrepancy was observed and corrected in A:TL.54 by dissociating Nan-i-Naugrim* from the ruins of Belegost and Nogrod.[3]

THE NAUGLAMÍR

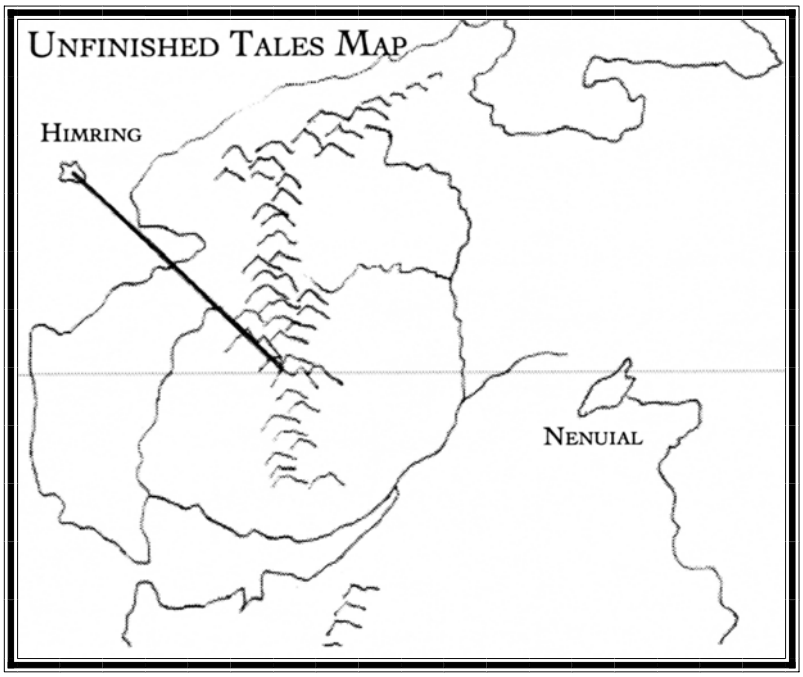
Tolkien's Dwarves were lifted in no small degree from northern European myth; he never saw the need to differentiate them from their folktale counterparts as he did the Elves. His use of names from the *Völuspa* is a prime exemplar of this; another is their originally malevolent disposition.

The Dwarves of Belegost and Nogrod never shed their villainy fully in what became *The Silmarillion.* They remained fully responsible for the death of Thingol, and shared blame for the fall of Doriath and Morgoth's near victory. But Tolkien finally shifted these crimes into the hands of the folk of Nogrod alone, since he wanted the history of the neighboring Dwarves of Belegost to be unsullied. The latter became heroes in battle against the dragons, and attempted to restrain their neighbors from war with Doriath. This role was not settled until the final form of *The Silmarillion* developed; in earlier conceptions they shared with the other tribe in the evils they perpetuated.

The most significant event to impact the First Age in which the Dwarves took part was the murder of Thingol and the seizure of the Nauglamír. This story was originally one of the Lost Tales, and it formed a pivotal moment in Quenta Silmarillion-a moment which is unfortunately obscure and which Tolkien never revised to his satisfaction. As is revealed in WotJ.352-356, Christopher Tolkien conceived a compromise tale, which he inserted into the published *Silmarillion.*

Originally the tale had Tinwelint (Thingol) as the main villain, ensorcelled by the curse which Mîm the Petty-dwarf had lain upon his treasure. But the Dwarves themselves fared no better, being mercenary, greedy and evil enough to hire Orcs to sack Doriath (LT 11.246-247). LT identifies the Dwarves of Belegost as the Longbeards or "Indrafangs;" those of Nogrod as the Nauglath. Their kings are Bodruith and Naugladur respectively (neither of whose names resurface in the *legendarium*).

The fragmentary evidence of Tolkien's plans for this story, and the circumstances of his subsequent work on the Elder Days, necessitated that Thingol's actions not be so coarse or so foolish as in LT. But the absence of Mîm's curse from the published story undermines its plausibility, since the redoubling of the greed of Thingol and his murderers by the curse is not present. Consequently, both the Dwarves and the Elven-king are imbued with a covetousness absent from the rest of the story. The fact



that *The Silmarillion* specifically recounts that Húrin laid the Nauglamír alone at Thingol's feet prevents any recasting of the LT or Ouenta stories in terms of a curse.

The magical protection which the Girdle of Melian gave to Doriath imposed an additional lack of flexibility, since the Dwarves would not have been capable of breaching it to invade and plunder Thingol's realm. Christopher Tolkien made it that Melian in her grief abandoned the kingdom, and with her left its magical bounds, so the pillaging Dwarves were not impeded by it. This is suggested by a brief note of Tolkien's (WotJ.355), but this (in my opinion) is an unsatisfactory solution; for Melian is represented as withdrawing her protection at her people's darkest hour. This might have been more plausible had she been summoned away against her will.[4]

After the sack of Doriath, the Dwarves of Nogrod were said to have been defeated by the Ents, Beren and the Green-elves. Though the composition of the victors is a very late conception, the destruction of the Nogrodrim was not, and Tolkien was never very clear as to what became of that people.

There are, however, some clues. In Appendix B, Tolkien states that around the year 40 of the Second Age, "Many Dwarves leaving their old cities in Ered Luin go to Moria and swell its numbers (LotR III.364)." He modifies this statement a bit in "The History of Galadriel and Celeborn," where he suggests that the folk of Belegost alone settled there:

There were and always remained some Dwarves on the eastern side of Ered Lindon, where the very ancient mansions of Nogrod and Belegost had been not far from Nenuial; but they had transferred most of their strength to Khazad-dûm. Celeborn had no liking for Dwarves of any race (as he showed to Gimli in Lothlórien), and never forgave them for their part in the destruction of Doriath; but it was only the host of Nogrod that took part in that assault, and it was destroyed in the battle of Sarn Athrad [*The Silmarillion* pp. 233-5]. The Dwarves of Belegost were filled with dismay at the calamity and fear for its outcome, and this hastened their departure eastwards to Khazad-dûm. Thus the Dwarves of Moria may be presumed to have been innocent of the ruin of Doriath and not hostile to the Elves. (UT.235)

But while the host of Nogrod may have been wiped out at Sarn Athrad, nowhere does Tolkien equate this *host* with the entire *population* of Nogrod. It is more likely that only the bulk of adult males were slain, and that the children, women, elderly, and guards who remained behind at Nogrod carried on the race. Note, though, that while the Appendix B entry speaks of the Blue Mountain Dwarves leaving their *cities*- i.e., *both* Nogrod and Belegost, thus necessitating that at least *some* Nogrodic Dwarves survived the First Age-the UT passage quoted above postdates Appendix B, suggesting that Tolkien evidently thought it important to modify this notion. Still, it would not be amiss to regard the people of Belegost as the primary addition to Moria's population, leaving the greater part of the Nogrodrim in the Blue Mountains.

THE DWARVEN RINGS

Initially Celebrimbor hoped to keep the locations of the Dwarf-rings secret and that information was only forced from him by torture. On this, Tolkien wrote that "neither the Seven or the Nine did [Celebrimbor] value as he valued the Three" (UT.238). This was to prove an unfortunate priority for the Dwarves.

Tolkien never gave a full accounting of how or when the Dwarven rings were given to the kings, except for his mentioning of a belief current among the folk of Moria:

> Of this Ring something may be said here. It was believed by the Dwarves of Durin's folk to be the first of the Seven that "was forged; and they say that it was given to the King of Khazad-dûm, Durin III, by the Elven-smiths themselves and not by Sauron, though doubtless his evil power was on it, since he had aided in the forging of all the Seven. (LotR III.357)

We have no means of evaluating this belief, but perhaps it should not be taken at face value. The fact that no complementary belief was found among the Blue Mountain Dwarves implies that they at least suspected that they *had* obtained their rings from Sauron. Sil.288-289 implies that the Seven were given to the Dwarves at about the same time as the Nine were given to the future Nazgûl. ICE gives that date as SA 1996+ in LoMe, DG and elsewhere; which makes sense, since it reflects the time before the appearance of the Nazgûl in the West (SA 2251) while their mortal forms transformed into wraiths (LotR III.364).

Despite statements in certain earlier works implying that the Blue Mountain tribes were few, absorbed by Durin's folk, or extinct by the Third Age, the LotR offers a strong argument for their persistence. The germ of this argument is the ring-poem itself: "Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone..." Indeed:

> It is said that the foundation of each of the Seven Hoards of the Dwarf-kings of old was a golden ring; but all these hoards long ago were plundered and the Dragons devoured them, and of the Seven Rings some were consumed in fire and some Sauron ensnared. (Sil.289)

If the Seven Rings were meant for Dwarven "kings," this implies that each of their

corresponding tribes possessed political autonomy in the era during which the rings were distributed (probably SA 2000-2100).

The MERP material does not correspond well with this. First, and most important to our essay, the MERP modules depict the two Blue Mountain tribes as having intermingled and taken the rule of a single king as a result of the destruction of their homes (stated emphatically in RotB. 14, though somewhat contradicted in LoMe III.42). A similar situation is given for the two Dwarf tribes of Ruuriik* in SA 714 (LoMe III.44-45).

It would seem odd for Sauron to give rings to minor chieftains submerged within larger clans, as is supposed to have occurred in the case of Drúin* and Dwálin.* Moreover, the opportunity to amass one of these seven hoards would not exist for a Dwarf-lord who was vassal to another ring-bearer. And the words "in their halls of stone" imply separate and independent dwellings.

At any rate, Tolkien's words in UT imply that the rulers of the Blue Mountains, by mass of numbers, would be the folk of Dwálin* (Belegost), not of Thrár* (Nogrod), who are supposed to be much fewer. Even after the emigration of a part of the *Belegostrim* to Moria, it could hardly be asserted that the people of Nogrod were predominant. Yet in TA 1640 the single king of their peoples is Thrár III* (obviously a member of the Nogrodic dynasty).[6]

Any changes in the number or independence of the Seven Tribes would best be dated to the late Second Age-or better, to the Third, since the malevolent influence of the rings could lead to the near extinction of several clans.

At some point, the rings of both tribes were lost, probably before the loss of Durin's ring in TA 2845. DG.125 indicates that four of the Seven were in Sauron's hands by TA 1640. For various reasons the ring of the Firebeards is probably one of the those rings lost to dragonfire, and the ring of the Broadbeams was captured. I will discuss why in the Tale of Years.

THE THIRD AGE

The activities of the Firebeards and Broadbeams in the later ages are not well documented, and are overshadowed by the presence in the Blue Mountains of the main line of Durin's house and its followers (TA 2802-2941). But the confusion goes both ways, as the persistence of several apparently contradictory details in LotR has unavoidably clouded the presence of Thorin and his father. In Appendix B, the Tale of Years, the following entry is given for the year 2799:

> Battle of Nanduhirion before the East-gate of Moria. Dáin Ironfoot returns to the Iron Hills. Thrain II and his son Thorin wander westwards. They settle *in the South* of Ered Luin beyond the Shire (2802). (LotR III.369; my emphasis)

In the *Shire* module, this was interpreted to mean that the halls of Thorin lay beyond the Shire to the southwest, in the midst of the southern portion of the Blue Mountains. However, in Appendix A ("Durin's Folk"), Tolkien wrote:

> ...and soon afterwards they removed and wandered in Eriador, until at last they made a home in exile in the east of the Ered Luin *beyond the Lune.* (LotR III.357; my emphasis)

The trouble is, "beyond the Lune" can hardly be presented as anything but the northern Blue Mountains, and that is an obvious contradiction with the Tale of Years entry. UT, however, sides with the Appendix A passage:

> 'For just as I was nearing Bree I was overtaken by Thorin Oakenshield, who lived then in exile beyond the *northwestern* borders of the Shire.' (UT.322; my emphasis)

The key to solving this without going too far afield is to read carefully. The Tale of Years states that Thorin settled in the southern Blue Mountains, but the Appendix A passage qualifies Thorin's destination with the -words "at last." Combined with other references in Appendix A concerning the poor wealth left in these mountains, we can surmise that Thorin's father settled for several decades in the south, whereas by the time of *TheHobbit* (TA 2941) Thorin himself must have moved to the north (perhaps after his father vanished). This is the solution given in Shire. 167-168.

In any case, the Longbeard exiles might have established several communities, ranging from the southern reaches of the Blue Mountains to just below the ruins of Belegost and Nogrod in the north. "Beyond the north-western borders of the Shire" suggests a location for Thorin's personal dwelling halfway between Little Lune/ Annúduin and the Gulf of Lhûn. (Shire. 167 states that he moved to the Nan-i-Naugrim, but that region is more NNW rather than NW of the Shire.) The absence of any indication in the Appendices that the exiles settled among other Dwarven tribes is telling, I think. It would be difficult to mine iron (LotR III.357) in the region of the Nan-i-Naugrim after close to six thousand years of sustained mining, industry and digging there.

Concerning the Blue Mountain Dwarves of the mid-Third Age, the *Arnor* module makes the following reference:

> The heirs of the flooded Dwarf-cities of Nogrod and Belegost make their homes in the Blue Mountains. They dwell in a collection of fourteen holds in the Nan-i-Naugrim, along the headwaters of the river Annúduin in the central Forered Luin. These are the tribes of the *Norfangrim* (S. "Firebeards") and the Lanthondrim (S. "Broadbeams") and their chief delvings are Mallost (S. "Gold Fortress") and Edennogrod (S. "New Nogrod")... (A:TL.54)

This note corrects statements in RotB implying that the vale was the location of the old Dwarf cities themselves, but does not explicitly modify a few other statements made in that module: the king of the vale is one Thrár III* who is said to rule TA 1604-1810 (RotB.12). Interestingly, but perhaps unimportantly, the king is not given a Ring of Power among his possessions.

The Shire module offers some additional information:

> ...The southern Blue Mountains separate South Lindon (S. Harlindon) from Rónalindon and Siragalë. A few-Dwarves work mines here, mostly around the ruins of the ancient city of Belegost [sic]....The northern Blue Mountains lie between North Lindon (S. Forlindon) and Numeriador. Here can be found most [of] the Blue Mountain Dwarves, also called Dwálin's and Thrár's folk (S. Naugrim-i-Dwálin and Naugrim-i-Thrár), the oldest civilized community in Eriador. Thirteen Dwarven holds lie under the mountain surrounding the Nan-i-Naugrim, the vale of the Dwarves....Thrár III, the Kind, is Lord of the Vale in TA 1640. He is known to the Shire-folk as "the Mountain King," as opposed to Báin of Khazad-dûm, "The Dwarven King." (Shire.121)

For the king of the valley in the late Third Age, *The Shire* gives the following:

Lord Grár of Nibbin-grod, the mostly ruined Khazad holding above the Nan-i-Naugrim, sent his brother Gror to intercept the Oakenshield. Riding southeast from Gamwich, Gror confronted Thorin on the day Gandalf chose Bilbo for his role as "burglar" on the quest to the mountain. After a night of violent argument in the woods outside Bywater, Thorin turned over to Gror all his possessions save those absolutely needed for the journey, as payment for the debts of his house. (Shire. 168)

It is not clear how the debts were accumulated except through the mining of lands claimed by this individual. The "mostly ruined" statement is interesting. In apparent contradiction with other texts, both earlier and later, this puzzling passage is found in Appendix A:

'Beyond the Lune was Elvish country, green and quiet, where no Men went; but Dwarves dwelt, and still dwell, in the east side of the Blue Mountains, especially in those parts south of the Gulf of Lune, where they have mines still in use. For this reason they were accustomed to pass east along the Great Road, as they had done for many years before we came to *the Shire*. At the Grey Havens dwelt Círdan the Shipwright, and some say he dwells there still, until the Last Ship sets sail into the West.' (LotR III.319)

The quotation marks bracketing this passage, and the reference to the Hobbits as "we," make it clear that Tolkien intended it to be read as a translation from Bilbo's commentary in the *Red Book*. The reference to Círdan and later to the Kings makes clear that it can be dated to TA 3002-3018. Thus the writer can be assumed to be presenting a Hobbitish point of view.

From that point of view, the Dwarves of what ICE labels the Tumnogoth laur* on its *Arnor* map would have been the most important Dwarvish settlement in the region. In combination with the reference to the "ruined" nature of the Nan-i-Naugrim* we must speculate that the ancient colony of the northern Blue Mountains was mostly abandoned at some time between TA 1643 and 1975.

I can with some confidence note that the departure of the Eriadorian Men from northern Arthedain (c. TA 1800, according to A:TP) can be linked to this abandonment, since the failure of adequate food supplies and trade would have motivated the Dwarves to emigrate south. Perhaps the paucity of the mines in the north also had a strong influence on the move, for now those mines had been worked some five thousand years. Whoever Grár* was, he must have claimed rule over the mountains north of the Lune, and thus some form of feudal obligation over Thorin.

WHO'S WHO?

AZAGHÂL

LoMe III.50 describes Azaghâl, the heroic lord of Belegost, as the "eldest son of King Dwálin"-not as a king in his own right. I suppose that the writers saw the length of Durin's life as typical, and assumed therefore that the other Dwarf-fathers would have had equal lifespans. But I don't see that as appropriate. Perhaps King Dwálin had fallen before him in that same battle, or died after 400+ years of existence. But Durin's sobriquet "Deathless" is adequate to imply his peculiar status. At any rate, Sil and WotJ make it clear that Azaghâl was in fact the king of Belegost at that time. We are not told by Tolkien who the king of Nogrod was, and the supposition that he died at Sarn Athrad is not unreasonable, given the original version of the story (LT II.235-237).

NARVI

Of Narvi there is this interesting remark of Gimli's: "Narvi and his craft and all of his kindred have vanished from the earth (LotR 1.318)." What Gimli meant by "kindred" I can only guess at. But it seems most likely that Gimli was speaking of the family of Narvi (those sharing his skills and spirit) and that it had become extinct.

Narvi's tribe must be a matter for supposition. I venture that the Firebeards are probable, since I imagine the people of Durin to have been more familiar with moon-letters and such (so that they would not require the assistance of Celebrimbor's art), and since the folk of Nogrod were not Elf-friends nor found among the folk of Moria. The Firebeards can be assumed to have the best command of Sindarin and the runes of Daeron by long proximity to Beleriand.

RÁLIN*

Ralin,* the most prominent Firebeard mentioned in LoMe III, is said to be a "second son of King Rúlin," born at "Zagragathol in the Ered Luin around S.A. 3380" and died in the early Third Age a "Lord Warder of the Ered Luin" (LoMe 111.56-57). Zagragathol* is otherwise unidentified in ICE, though ToMe.31 gives it as a location in the Nan-i-Naugrim.*

A description, all too brief, of his quest for something called the "Great Stone Hammer" is given. Not only is he said to have obtained it but he is the "Second of Seven Lords of the Stone Hammer." Evidently the Hammer was supposed to be extant into the mid-Third Age?[6]

TELCHAR

The most famous son of Nogrod in Tolkien's works was Telchar the Smith, forger of Narsil. He is, for an unknown reason, absent from LoMe III. He probably perished at Sarn Athrad, if he was not one of those who died in Doriath:

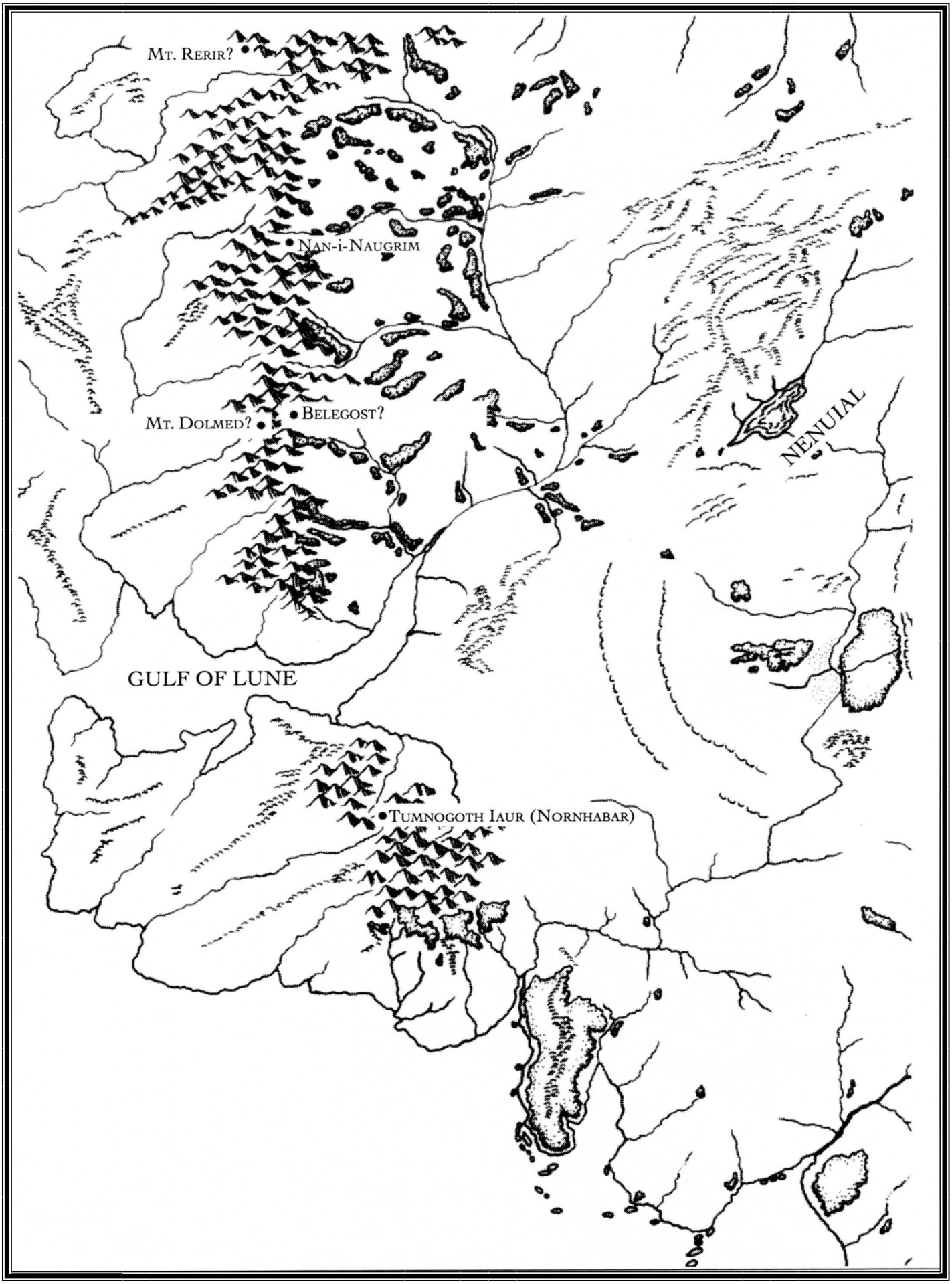
Therefore Thingol bethought [him] of arms, which before his folk had not needed, and these at first the Naugrim smithied for him. For they were greatly skilled in such work and none among them surpassed the craftsmen of Nogrod, of whom Telchar the Smith was the greatest in renown. (WotJ.12)

THRÚR*

Thrur* is mentioned as the nephew of Thrár* of Nogrod and his successor after the Battle of Sarn Athrad (LoMe III.66). Unless (and the text denies this) we are talking about a later Thrár*, it is hard for me to see how this king could be the nephew of a Dwarf supposed to be the first of his line. Assuming that this Thrár* was one of the two dwarf patriarchs that awoke in the Ered Luin, then he has neither parents or siblings, and the only possible nephew would be through a later wife (i.e., his wife's nephew, the wife being probably a daughter of Dwálin*). It is obvious from the LotR Appendix A's discussion of the line of Durin that lineal male succession was the pattern. Therefore Thrúr* must be a descendant of Thrár.*

OTHERS

There are few examples of Firebeards or Broadbeams after the Second Age in the MERP modules, having only a small presence in their mid-Third Age setting. Tolkien lists some non-Durinic members in Thorin's company of TA 2941; it is no great stretch to interpret these as Firebeards, as that people had a greater historical connection with Moria than the other tribes. These are Bifur, Bofur and Bombur (LotR III.361; LoMe 111.52).


Mt. Rerir?
Nan-i-Naugrim
Mt. Dolmed?
Belegost?
Nenuial
GULF OF LUNE
Tumnogoth Iaur (Nornhabar)

The most egregious aspect of the LoMe III's history is that after the capture of Ruuriik* by Múar* the Balrog in SA 1157, the two Dwarf-houses of that country are displaced thousands of miles away to the Blue Mountains! Brief comments throughout the Dwarven characters in LoMe III make clear that they remained in the Blue Mountains beyond SA 2700, a period embracing some of the more pivotal events in Eriador (when it was rather dangerous to live there, andwhen the rings were given out).

Even with the activities of the Nazgûl from SA 2100 on, these tribes would be safer and less isolated from their kin if they remained in the East. Indeed, and rather definitively, Tolkien states that Dwarves "were loth to migrate and make permanent dwellings or 'mansions' far from their original homes," and that the first arising of the four eastern tribes were in two locations "at distances as great or greater than that between the Blue Mountains and Gundabad" (PoMe.301). These two locations could be found no closer, I suppose, than the mountains beside the Sea of Rhûn, the Ered Harmal** or the Barl Syrnac* on the ICE map (Mordor being out of the question).

If we are to determine the identities and placement of these paired tribes, a glance at the Dwarven Migrations map on LoMe III.43 provides some clues. Thélor* is associated with the Ered Harmal;* Barin* with the north and Bávor* with the south, and Drúin's folk with the mountains adjacent to the Sea of Rhûn. The least disruptive pairings, at first glance, would be Barin*/Drúin* and Thélor*/Bavor.*[7] The absence of these tribes from the Blue (and the Misty) Mountains offers clarity and does not tremendously impact their history, since that requires that they only be at some great remove from the ancestral halls. DG.11-12 states that a part of the eastern exiles (50 in all) settled in Amon Lanc. Given that LoMe 111.45 says that "Drúin's line was virtually wiped out," it is becomes likely that they settled in their old haunts: Mirkwood and the northern spur of the Ered Harmal,* where the remnants of old settlements of distant kin might merge and renew the line.

TEXT NOTES

1. "Firebeards" at least is similar in sound with "Longbeards" whom Tolkien, in the initial stage of the development of his mythology, identified with the Dwarves of Belegost (a position that had to be abandoned when *The Hobbit* and later LotR applied the name to Durin's tribe, the folk of Moria). This nomenclature shifted back and forth, but seems to have stabilized at the time of the writing of *The Hobbit* and LotR. It is nonetheless rather often emended from Nogrod to Belegost in the manuscripts published in the History of Middle-earth series.
2. If we adopt this (as I do in my Tale of Years) the Nan-i-Naugrim* must be mostly deserted by TA 1975.
3. Consequently, the Nan-i-Naugrim* need not be regarded as contradicting Tolkien, whose draft materials in fact corroborate the presence of Dwarves north of the "Little Lune" (PoMe.313, 328). This tributary, which lies south of Nan-i-Naugrim,* appears on the ICE maps as the Annúduin.* According to those same maps, the river runs north of Dolmed, as can be seen by the situation of the Ascar/Rathlóriel. This other river is identical to the upper course of the primary river of Forlindon, evidenced by the placement of Himring. The Little Lune flows from the north side of a mountain (in fact Dolmed) on the UT and LotR maps, the river of Forlindon from the south side. This mountain is quite distinct and large on the LotR map.
4. Perhaps the death of her husband prevented her from refusing a long-dormant command of the Valar.
5. I think it evident from the succession to the throne of Durin that a line through a female was not acceptable to head a house in preference to any male lines, otherwise the sons of Dís would have a better claim than Dáin II in TA 2941.
6. Although there is nothing *per se* wrong with the existence of this individual and his quest, the Hammer's powers make it an matter of incredulity that this is part of Middle-earth. The functional irrelevance of the hammer (which is not given any further history) serves again to call into question this tale's place in the material.
7. This issue needs to be examine in full in its own article.

THE TALE OF YEARS

The Second Age

1 Mithlond and Lindon are founded (LotR III.364).

c. 40 Khazad-dûm receives many refugees from the Blue Mountains (LotR III.364). *By this time, two Dwarven communities have emerged in the Blue Mountains: the northerly Nan-i-Naugrim (built around the ancient tombs and awakening-place of the fathers of the Firebeards and Broadbeams) and the Tumnogoth Iaur (built around Nornhabar, a First Age colony of Belegost south of the Gulf ofLhûn). The king of the Broadbeams, Thrúr, becomes the territorial lord of the Nan-i-Naugrim and smaller delvings in the lands north of the Gulf of Lhûn, andDwár of the Firebeards makes his abode and realm in the southern Blue Mountains, between Siragalë and Harlindon. More than half of the surviving population of the Firebeards chooses to depart for Durin's halls. Each of the Blue Mountain holds contains a sizable minority of the other tribe (Firebeard or Broadbeam) from the First Age.* [Note 1]

c. 400 Bronze-working becomes advanced among the Eriadorians (A:TP.33). *Much of this technological development occurs with the advice of Dwarves.* [Note 2]

c. 500 Sauron reawakens (LotR III.364).

600 The Númenóreans begin to explore the coasts (LotR III.364).

750 Eregion is founded (LotR III.364).

777 Vinyalondë is founded at the Gwathló's mouth (A:TP.34).

880 The first Númenórean haven at Tharbad is built, where the Dwarves ferry goods from Ost-in-Edhil and Moria to Minhiriath on their way to the Blue Mountains (A:TR34).

c. 1000 The construction of Barad-dûr begun (LotR III.364).

1200 Sauron arrives in Eriador intending the corruption of the Eldar. He is turned away from Lindon, but welcomed in Eregion (LotR III.364).

1312 A Troll-kingdom develops in the Enedhwaith (A:TP.34; A:TL.52).

c. 1500-1590 The forging of the Rings of Power (LotR III.364).

c. 1600 The One Ring is forged by Sauron in Mordor (LotR III.364).

1693-1701 The War of the Elves (and later, Dúnedain) with Sauron (LotR III.364). The Longbeards of Moria believe that Durin III received his ring from Celebrimbor before the fall of Eregion (LotR III.357).

1701 The beginning of a long period of peace in Eriador (LotR III.364).

1793 Tharbad becomes a full-fledged Númenórean colony (A:TP.35). *Initially Tharbad contains a large Dwarven population.* [Note 3]

c. 1800 The Númenóreans begin colonizing the coasts of Middle-earth (LotR III.364).

1880-1882 Mûrazôr (the future Witch-king) rebels against the King of Númenor and seizes Lond Daer. He besieges Tharbad, but ultimately abandons both to take the rule of Umbar (A:TP.35).

1914-1943 The Númenóreans and Eriadorians fight a guerrilla war for control of the forests of Minhiriath and Enedhwaith (A:TP.35). Some surviving communities of the defeated Eriadorians settle in Siragalë

along the Dwarven roads (Shire.23). *The Dwarves do not overtly intervene in this conflict, but the continuing resistance of the Eriadorians settled in Dwarven trading-posts and in Dwarven territory, as well as their access to weaponry, implies that the Dwarves favored the Eriadorians.* [Note 4] c.

2000 The Faithful begin to settle the Twilight Hills, and Tharbad becomes their point of trade with their kinsmen (A:TP.35). It is about this date that the Nine received their rings (DG.48, 50).

c. 2100 *The Dwarven Rings (perhaps excluding that ofDurin) are given by Sauron.* [Note 5]

2251 Approximate first sighting of the Nazgûl (LotR *111.364).*

2350 The population of Tharbad begins to reflect the views of the King's Men (A:TP.35). *Racial animosities in Tharbad force the Dwarven colony to withdraw to their ancestors' holds.* [Note 6]

c. 2500-2600 The Forest Wars between the King's Men and the Eriadorians of northern Minhiriath; destruction of most of the Old Forest (A:TP.35). Eriadorians of Siragalë organize a continuing resistance in the areas beyond the Baranduin, within Elf-country (Shire.24). *Despite their earlier scruples and friendship with the Eriadorians, the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains act conspicuously mercenary, selling secrets of explosives and chemical fire to the King's Men.* [Note 7]

2900 *Carn Dûm is founded by the king of the Broadbeams, now seeking wealth. His followers are accompanied by adventurers and miners from Durin's folk. Large numbers of Broadbeams and all the Firebeards of the Nan-i-Naugrim remain behind.* [Note 8]

3261 Ar-Pharazôn invades Middle-earth and captures Sauron (LotR III.364).

3319 The downfall of Númenor (LotR III.365).

3320 Arnor and Gondor are founded by the Faithful (LotR III.365). Lindon's borders are formally drawn at the Baranduin (Shire.24). *The death of the last ruling king of the Firebeards. His heir in Khazad-dûm vanishes into obscurity; the Tumnogoth Iaur becomes a wardship of Lindon.* [Note 9]

3429 Sauron attacks Gondor (LotR III.365).

3430-3441 The War of the Last Alliance (LotR III.365). Some Dwarves under Durin IV of Moria participate (A:TL.172, 178).

The Third Age

10 Siragalë (and formally, the Tumnogoth Iaur, now mostly empty) becomes a part of Arnor (Shire.24).

495-515 Arnor wars with the Orcs of Gundabad (A:TR.37).

861 Arnor is divided among the sons of Eärendur (LotR III.366).

870-930 The Angirith pass (in Angmar) is opened by agents of Amlaith, king of Arthedain; from which trade flows for the next 400 years. Attempts to build a port on the Ice-bay fail (A:TP.37).

1050 Called by Sauron, the Nazgûl return from hiding in the East (DG.6).

1276 The secret arrival of the Witch-king in Angmar (A:TP.38). *The Nazgûl-lord captures the king of the Broadbeams and his ring. Despite his cunning, the Nazgûl is unable to discover the whereabouts of the Firebeard ring. Saruman later posits that the ring melted under dragon-fire some 1500 years later.* [Note 10]

c. 1300 The Witch-king appears openly in Angmar (LotR III.366).

1352-9 Cardolan and Arthedain war with Angmar and Rhudaur (LotR III.320; A:TP.38).

1409 The Second Northern War: Amon Sûl is destroyed; the Elves of Lindon intervene to save Arnor (LotR III.366).

1601 The Shire is granted to the Hobbits (LotR III.367).

1636 The Great Plague (LotR *111.567).*

c. 1800 Colder winters force the populace of Eriador south (A:TP.39). *Most of the Nan-i-Naugrim is abandoned over the next century because of dwindling stocks of food and the lack of rich veins of metal* [Note 11]

1810 Death of Thrár III of the Broadbeams (RotB.12). *He has no heirs. The king is laid to rest beside his ancestors and one branch of the surviving royal house emigrated to the southern Blue Mountains. Another line remains in the Nan-i-Naugrim, claiming rule over all of the northern Blue Mountains.* [Note 12]

1974 Angmar invades and destroys Arthedain (LotR III.367).

1975 Arvedui in his flight attempts to take refuge at the Nan-i-Naugrim in the Blue Mountains. *Because the chieftain there gives him no succor* [Note 13] he leaves for the Bay of Forochel where he is drowned (LotR *111.367).*

1980 Durin's Bane awakens in Moria (LotRIII.368).

1981 Moria falls (LotR III.368). *Many of the survivors come to Eriador (A:TP.39). They settle in the south of the Blue Mountains.* [Note 14]

1999 Erebor is founded by Thorin I (LotR III.368). Most, but not all, of the folk of Durin leave the Blue Mountains for the Lonely Mountain (A:TP.39).

2210 Thorin I leaves Erebor for the Grey Mountains (LotR III.368).

2570 Dragons begin to infest the North (LotR III.368).

2589 Dáin I is killed by a dragon (LotR III.368). 2590 Thrór moves back to Erebor. Grór his brother settles in the Iron Hills (LotR III.368).

2720-2750 Orkish invasion of Cardolan and the Bree-land (A:TP.39). *Dwarvish aid is crucial in repelling the invaders.* [Note 15]

2758-2759 The Long Winter. Corsairs attack Eriador's coast (LotR III.369). *At some unknown date during this period, the exiled Firebeard heir and his ring fall into the claws of a dragon and perish.* [Note 16]

2760-2800 Rangers and Eriadorians drive the Corsairs from Minhiriath (A:TR40).

2770 Erebor is seized by Smaug. The Dwarves flee (LotR III.369).

2790 Thrór is killed at the gates of Moria. Gathering of the Dwarf-tribes for war (LotR III.369).

2793-2799 The War of the Dwarves and Orcs (LotR III.369). The Shire provides supplies for the Dwarves (Shire.26).

2799 The Battle of Nanduhirion (LotR III.369).

2802 Thráin II and Thorin settle in the Blue Mountains, west of the Shire (LotR III.369). *They add their numbers to the rising population of Tumnogoth Iaur.* [Note 17] 2841 Thráin II sets out for Erebor. At this time he bears the last of the Dwarven rings (LotR III.369).

2845 Thráin II is captured and imprisoned at Dol Guldur. His ring is taken from him (LotR III.369).

2850 Gandalf enters Dol Guldur and discovers Thráin II there. The Dwarf-king gives him the map to Erebor (LotR III.369).

2911-2912 The Fell Winter; Tharbad is abandoned as a result of flooding (LotR III.370). *Rising waters threaten Thorin and his folk, who have made homes in old Nornhabar. They resettle eventually north of the Lune.* [Note 18]

2941 Gandalf visits Thorin in the Blue Mountains northwest of the Shire. The Quest of Erebor (LotR III.359, 370). Grór of the Nan-i-Naugrim claims compensation for his mines in the mountains, and is mollified by the surrender of all but Thorin's necessities and some portable wealth (Shire. 168).

2989 Balin attempts to retake Moria (LotR III.371).

3010 Corsair activity cuts Eriador off from Gondor by sea (A:TR40).

3018-3019 The Quest of the Fellowship and the War of the Ring (LotR III.372-376).

CHRONOLOGY NOTES

1. My largest addition to the history of the Second Age is a new Dwarf-realm in the southern Blue Mountains: Tumnogoth Iaur, as indicated (though nowhere described) on the *Arnor* maps. The Tumnogoth Iaur (S. "Ancient Deep Vale of the Dwarves"), a label probably applied by the Elves of South Lindon, is a narrow valley, or set of valleys, fed by several streams: the Nogothîr, the Belesîr and the Airesir. The map shows a large lake surrounded by steep mountains, with several gates-two visible, two others implied. Various other maps give Dwarven settlements there (A:TL.196 for SA 1600; 199 for TA 3018). Other maps indicate a great haven (Shire.6 for TA 1640; MERP^2.265 undated). Note that these maps contradict each other. The location is unmarked on the *Arnor* maps referring to the mid-Third Age. I have chosen to adopt the *Arnor* chronology, it being the most recent work. The MERP^2 map appears to refer to the late-Third Age. In this history I have applied the name "Nornhabar" to the principal settlement of this valley. The name was created by Tolkien as the Sindarin rendering of Khazad-dûm (WotJ.206) and replaced an earlier equation of Nogrod with Khazad-dûm. Nornhabar means Dwarf-delving in Sindarin, though it reflects a Noldorin influence. (See WotJ.387-389 for etymology of *norn-*.)

2. The reliance of the Dwarves on Men for certain goods and food parallels similar evidence in Rhovanion (PoMe.302-303). It seems obvious that the Eriadorians would serve the same function for the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains.

3. Inference from the timeline in A:TP.59. The First Age and Second (in Ost-in-Edhil) contains much data suggestive of a significandy less insular Dwarven society. Dwarves are said to have built the ferry there, in any case.

4. The Dwarven communities of the Blue Mountains were dependent for much of the Second Age on the Eriadorians, who continue to be their main suppliers of food and other provisions by any measure, since the Númenóreans are evidently initially entrepots for trade and the transfer of goods with their mother country. There is little to be gained by an expulsion or subjugation of Dwarves by the Dúnedain.

5. The only clue we have for the dating of this event is the narrative in Sil.288-289 (very much undated and rather confusing, since it fails to match in many details the LotR Appendices). The implication is that the gift of the Dwarf-rings was around the same time as that of the Nine to Men. I reason a date *after* the Nine for this circumstantial reason: the One Ring had failed to sway Durin (assuming he had his Ring already), and the phenomenal success of the Nine encouraged Sauron to attempt the Seven. This would have to occur before the provenance and nature of such gifts were known (i.e., before the Nine became wraiths). It is important that Sauron gave them swiftly and in close succession; otherwise he would have soon realized their failure and halted the gifts. I give two tales associated with the rings of the Firebeards and the Broadbeams later in this issue of OH.

6. Persecution from the King's Men is as good as any a reason for the Dwarves to leave. The Dwarves' own rulers, now jealous and secretive, would have encouraged this withdrawal as well.

7. The Dwarves hereafter are much more mercenary. This is a result of the rings. KS indicates the Dwarves profited from that war in the Third Age, which provides some parallels. For the destruction (or at least culling) of forests, in any rate, Dwarves have few peers. (Cf. Sil.46 for the exchange between Yavanna and Aulë regarding the Dwarves.)

8. ICE never provided Carn Dûm with an origin, apart from references to Durin s tribe being there (which I hope I have finessed). The ring which the Broadbeam king wore would have made more compelling the desire for wealth and independence that lies within every Dwarven breast. The Nan-i-Naugrim, now nearly three thousand years in occupation (not counting the Elder Days), would have seemed poor and overpopulated to such a Dwarf, and there was evidently much iron in Angmar which could be exploited. Another external consideration is the fact that the ring's loss necessitates that its bearer reside in a location within Sauron's reach. This condition is not met by the Nan-i-Naugrim, but it certainly fits Angmar, since that land was overrun by the Witch-king.

9. This event is given in more detail in the narrative that follows later in this issue. The *Arnor* maps imply the abandonment of the Tumnogoth Iaur during the early to mid-Third Age. But the name itself suggests antiquity, which I provide by its older period of habitation by the Firebeards in the Second Age. The absence of a large number of Dwarves there in TA 1640 explains how it has escaped attention in most ICE releases.

10. The story of this event will be posted on the *Other Hands* website. Although the loss of this ring is very early, my source analysis shows that the pursuit of these rings has proceeded apace in the MERP modules. It also helps on two counts: to explain 1) the absence of the Broadbeams from any events of consequence in the Third Age, and 2) the low population and decay of the Nan-i-Naugrim in ensuing centuries.

11. The best explanation for the Nan-i-Naugrim I have seen so far is that its mines are those referred to in Appendix B. It also fits well with the awakening place of the two fathers of the Blue Mountain Dwarves. In any case, the mines become mostly empty between TA 1643 and 1975. The Dwarves, being dependent on food from surrounding farms, would be forced to move when their supply did.

12. The death of Thrár III is given in RotB, although no indication of this fate is. His death is too close to TA 1800 to escape notice. I also noticed in that module no mention of a successor or heir.

13. The presence of Grór in The Shire implies a few Dwarves remained there. (Indeed, the locale is marked as Dwarvish on late Third Age maps throughout the MERP series.) Though it seems a nasty thing to do, their treatment of Arvedui is not altogether out of character for suspicious Dwarves, and is an inescapable conclusion from the comparison of LotR with the MERP modules. NW.86 places a Dwarven settlement with the name of Ringrond in the northern stretch of the Blue Mountains near the Ice Bay, and is probable that the module's author intended this to be Arvedui's hiding place.

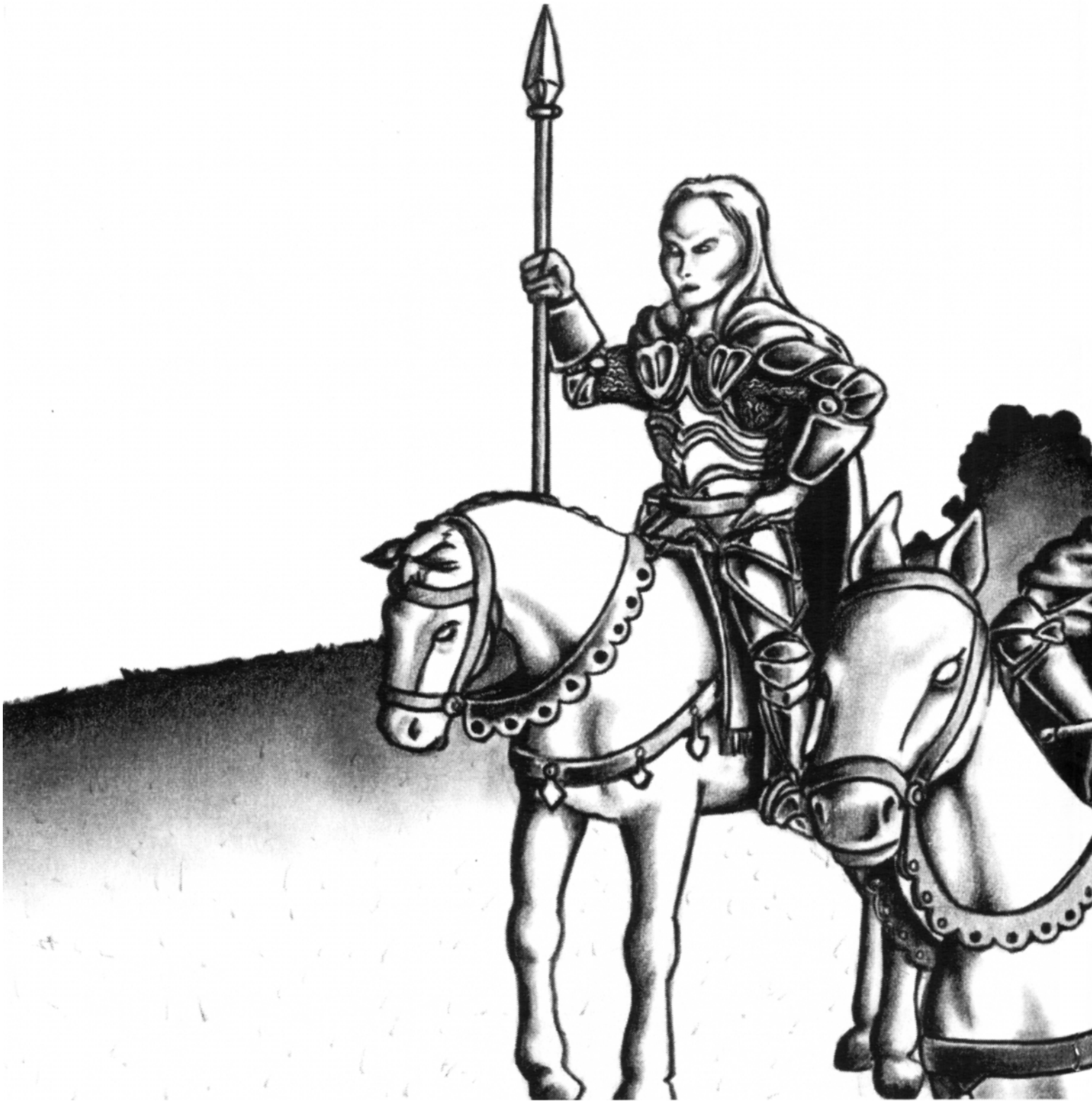
14. This is a clear result of accepting Tumnogoth Iaur as the greater community at the time of *The Hobbit* and LotR. The northern settlement is too remote from food and trading sites to make it viable.

15. Given the dependency of the Dwarves on Eriadorian farmers (now fewer in number) and their hatred of Orcs, this is logical.

16. Several Dwarf-rings had to perish in fire, according to Sil.289, but with four in the Necromancer's hands in TA 1640, only three remain: Durin's and two others. These then must have been the two to be lost, sometime after the arrival of the dragons. I confess that the story requirements of ICE's forthcoming *Dwarven Company* adventure kit force me to have the Firebeard ring still extant.

17. Based on my analysis of Appendix A.

18. A solution that is based on an examination of the *Arnor* map. A large mere is shown in the Dwarf-mountain, which would be swollen with the heavy thaw.



Elf-lords of Lindon

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The figures featured on this page and many others in the Mithril series can be obtained from

Time Machine Miniatures

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Gil-galad, High-king in exile (M269) — This figure is of Gil-galad mounted, carrying a spear in his right hand. He is armoured in plate-mail, the mail showing at the arms and crotch. The figure is hard to scale correctly, because of its seated position, but it does not reach the height of 7'6" given in Elves.95. Overall both the mount and the elf are somewhat smaller in scale than the unmounted figures in the line.

The plate mail is composed of articulated plates and closely approximates the style of the late 14th-early 15th centuries in southern Germany. The Elven style of the Last Alliance line shows several technological advantages over the Númenórean equipage, mostly in apparent flexibility and lower weight.

Gil-galad's equipment are described by Tolkien, in the 'Lay of Gil-galad.' Curiously 'his shining helm' and 'his silver shield' are not present in the figure (LotR I.198) but that may be because of their omission in Elves.96. We must assume that the High-king is travelling through enemy territory, but does not expect pitched battle. This is supported by the light caprisoning of the horse. Also, for some reason, his sword hangs from his right side.

When painting this figure, the armour itself should be silver, probably washed in small amount of deep blue ink. The cape should be a deep blue-purple colour or white with pale blue shadows, reflecting his heraldry (purple with silver stars). His hair should be gold-blond and he had a fair complexion. The horse should probably be white or dappled grey.

Gil-galad, High-king in exile (M270) — Elrond is a figure somewhat similar to Gil-galad but instead of a spear, he holds a banner with his left hand. He is shorter than the High-king and his armour is chased and decorated less extensively.

The Elves book (p66) hints at a grey-blue colour-scheme. Overall since the figure matches Gil-galad, it should be painted in the same manner, with perhaps the border of the cloak and the horse's equipage being personalized. Elrond should have black hair and a fair complexion (Lúthien's blood). His horse might be painted grey-black to match.

The banner the herald carries has a strange design on it of four bow-like objects and two diamonds. They meet meets in a small circle. This is probably a Sun-motif, and refers to the several things: the return of the Noldor in Middle-earth; the awakening of Man; and the power she has over shadow. It is probably the banner of the whole alliance. For this reason I would depict it in gold over pale blue.

Cirdan at Gorgoroth (M273) — The bearded elf, Círdan, is the only unmounted figure from Lindon (Oropher is also unmounted, as are all the Dúnedain). Like the previous two elves, Círdan is clad in plate mail. His armour is slightly less advanced and suggests greater age. Although Círdan is made out to be 7'4"' in Elves.47 he is roughly the same height as Gil-galad in this figure. He carries an immense two-handed sword, which is not reflected in his MERP statistics.

There are some limitations to painting artistry in this figure since it is mostly armoured, with no cape. The Elves book (48) suggests a blue highlight to his armour, which is probably ideal. His hair and beard at this date are still dark brown, and his complexion is certainly a little bit darker than the two previous elves (from exposure to the sun at sea).

The divergences from MERP are generally in the area of standardized equipment which is somewhat heavier and more business-like than the *Elves* book gives. No mention of plate is given there, for instance, except, for Círdan.

These figures are clearly Elf-lords, however, and may see limited utility in the average campaign. They have the most utility for the First Age or for a minatures wargaming game of the Second Age, but have aesthetic interest for their attractiveness and realism.

THE TALE OF DWARI AND KÚRA

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*Of this tale it is said there are many versions, all tales of rumour, and their truths are hard to discern. It is more than probable that the lines ofThrár and Dwálin both told this tale, and perhaps they told it differently. But as both lines are now lost, and the rings they bore are likewise lost, it must be for the reader to decide what to believe. It was rendered into the present saga-form quite recently, after the occupation of Erebor, and while I have restored certain named to their originals, the greatest narrative fault of the tale lies in its sparseness of characters, the companions of Dwari (SA 2012-2113) and Thrarin (SA 2007-2191, later King of Nan-i-Naugrim from 2077). The event is probably dated from2105-2107**

-report by Saruman to the Wise

[*Other versions from Saruman's notes may see publication in time; it is noteworthy that Dwari's captaincy of the Tharbad dwarf-house is dated from Numenorean records to SA 2104-2107, so the narrative is clearly compressed, and the hero here is Dwari, an unsympathetic character in some tales.]

The dwarf-smith came from the underbelly of the bridge into the damp Swanfleet air, his beard and hair wet and his eyes agleam.

Around him in stone the massive contrivance of Tharbad rose, illuminated by elf-lamps, dwarf-flames and the hearths of Men. Beside the quays a barge rolled in, its rowers churning the brakish waters in heaves of shouting, singing, in an eastern tongue.

The barge was weighed with men and goods (some wealthy, others precariously seating amongst all their worldly possessions), and dirty women, and old and young, sending the barge tumbling forward and slick with fume.

From it rushed out its burden, Tharbad's children, new born into the city's mystery and clammy hope, westward waiting.

Last of the passengers was a dark, tall man, his clothing a mess of patches so interwoven that the original colours were indeciferable. His cloak was soaked through at the edges, the water bleeding up into its resewn folds. But his eyes were grey in his brown face, a face of unknown climes and unknown voices.

He swung his gunnysack onto the cobblestones, with a defiant shrug at the smith.

'I hear you might take a challenge, dwarf; I can show what is to be won.'

Pulling from his back a sack, the peddler rummaged around till he revealed a small object. This he cupped close in his hands.

Old dwarf! He lives alone,
No wife, no slaves
His house is carved from stone
River-rocks be pays
A tinpenny for,
To eat with peas, and mead
no more.

-Tharbadian children's rhyme (poss. SA origin)

Impatiently the smith leaned forward...

This smith was not mindful of such doggerel, and lived oddly for any folk. His home lay at the base of a rock rise from the murky Greyflood, beside the fishers' bridge. The ceilings that he had hewn were as old as the city of Men, and tall enough for the children of Men, for Dwarves. But he did not live alone. He had an only daughter, seldom seen, and never rightly guessed at, at least by bigger folk.

It would have astounded the rich Númenóreans of the towers and the Gwathuirim alike that the poor smith they harbored (or that harbored them) was accounted rich by the Kings of the Mountains, though they delighted in his brilliant skill, his trifles that emblazoned their symbols on their cloaks and in the hair of their womenfolk. His greatest works were made in secret, and were wonderful, though seldom deadly.

In these days the tribe of Durin waxed in wealth and number; and the scattered and less numerous Dwarves of the Blue Mountains were seldom quiet on that account. Most merely desired to live amongst or trade peacefully with the Misty Mountains tribe, having the pragmatism and quiet spirit to set aside jealousy, pretension and pride. But a few were less inured to their loss, and fiercely defensive when the nature of their fall ever came up.

It is perhaps no real surprise that this number counted the tribal kings and their kin with them. Nor did the two tribes of Nogrod and Belegost live in harmony, for the folk of Belegost blamed their neighbors in their hearts for the cataclysm. The folk of Nogrod, moreover, were distrusted by many of the Free Peoples, and their continued isolation enforced a festering pride and aloof mien. But both were homeless, their grand halls shattered, and to the north had the Broadbeams of Nogrod fared, to what men would call the Vale of the Dwarves, and south of the Lune were the Firebeards of Belegost, in Nornhabar, the dwarf-mine.

These days, of course, it is no great a thing to say that Dwarves are a proud and stubborn folk, secretive and fell. But even so one must recall that the doom of the thrawn folk had not been shaped in the time I am recounting; and that the Dwarves walked short and freely amongst the Men of Eriador, and whilst feared, their were not so hated; and whilst rich, were not so begrudged. The Men of these parts remembered the ancient kindness and alliance which had united their races against the Darkness.

Two princes of these folk, each one a son of the ruling kings-Dwari of the Firebeards, Thrarin of the Broadbeams-were now in company, some days from Tharbad. Being in no hurry, with Men bearing goods, and in some numbers, they had made slow progress, and so had had many nights to grow accustomed to each other.

In these times, the seat and sceptre of Númenor in the North-west lay at Tharbad, the home of the seafarers, and whose riches had attracted and whose walls had protected the folk of many near and some far realms.

So unto Tharbad must come the Dwarves of the Lune, if they sought profit, and if they sought the High Men to parley or trade smithcraft with. Whilst Khazad-dûm was ascending in wealth and dominance amongst Dwarves, the folk of the old Blue Mountains carefully guarded their wisdom: the secrets of Elder knowledge, the blade-knowledge that felled dragons.

So to these remnants turned the grave

lords of Númenor-'Make us swords, make us instruments of war and apparati of trade.' And they would have gained more, had not a lone dwarf stood apart, preferring to work in mundane ways, fashioning tools and simple things, and this against the wishes of his king: Telphin of Tharbad.

Now Thrarin over the evening fire told Dwari about this dwarf: 'Telphin had few kin; his wife had dwelt in the vale of the northern Blue Mountains after she could not bear to live in secrecy any longer, and many of his folk, the Broadbeams, were drowned in the catastrophe that short-lived Men have made a myth.'

The old king of the Broadbeams he had no words for; and he said nothing of their disagreement. But Telphin, he said, delighted in the wealth of Khazad-dûm that he could lay hands upon, now increasing in purity and costliness, and thus lived like a hermit amidst stranger crowds.

But the noble Dwarves that besought the guidance of this master smith, and only the most ambitious, sought him as master, though all had been turned away. Silver mirrors he made, so clear and fine that they shone as a moonlit, unrippled pool, and clasps as if they could float upon the breast, and often rings, for the hands of the women of Númenor, though all through intermediaries, never in person.

Dwari could see his new friend's disquiet and yearning.

'It will be a shame that the secrets he knows will be known only the Maker when he dies.'

'It is our unspoken fear. That is why I myself come to Tharbad, to seek him, though our errand from the Nan-i-Naugrim is generally one of friendship with Men.'

'Well, I have no equal errand. But my father hopes that I can learn much of Men and their ways whilst I stay and take up the captaincy of the dwarf-house there.' Dwari was being modest, since the justness and the care of his heart was known, amongst Dwarves, to be full and noble for a youth.

The dwarf-house of Tharbad was the greatest meeting-place of Dwarves in Eriador above the ground, where boats from the Mannish settlements about the dwarf-mansion and caravans from the Blue Mountain tribes on the North Road met. Here, unmolested by Mannish greed, the Dwarves could take their ease. But of course there were complex reasons for this locus; and amongst them indeed the Sea-kings hoped to keep the Dwarves apart, under their own law, where they could be watched, if their famed mercenariness extended to the enemies of Andor.

The dwarf-house was low and broad, and not over-encumbered with windows or doors, and was built of granite stone, well-fitted and carved, the roof being of slate. It sat along the river, where shipments from the Mountains upstream would come, and its grey bulk, under its sharply tapered roof, broken by many chimneys, seemed like a little mountain fastness. A yard enclosed it, with a high wall, so that the building sat in the midst of its haze and noise at a remove from any Mannish dwelling.

Outside the wide mansion were the encampments of followers, mercenaries and layabouts, Men and Dwarves alike. Thrarin and Dwari took possession of some empty rooms. Dwari chose the prized cellars, and hoisted their banners outside the gate, being in possession of the captaincy, but he put off for a time the full assembly and mete of justice, for the previous incumbent had departed with much unfinished business.

In the morning Dwari and Thrarin were paid court, by wealthy Men. Thrarin made a few sales, of metalwork or of commission. But he was not profiting much. His friend made several excursions that day into the city, watching the ships and soldiery, and making slip from his jaded compatriots. Dwari was sitting dockside when he saw a dwarf rowing under the eaves of a bridge. This was odd, so he went to see who it was.

Meanwhile, as was his wont, Telphin came in his shabby cloak to the hall to see who these arrivals with so many carts were. In his wake came silence. His hands were wrapped in rags, his left clenched, his face blistered. So he came, his silvering beard singed, matted, his eyes burning, seemingly enough for to do such damage. But it was Thrarin who craved Telphin's generosity, and he could not do it here, but in secret, else his rivals might intercede. So Thrarin came to him, this crafter, standing in the courtyard of the dwarf-hall, hoping to make plans to meet again.

'I am Thrarin, who is the son of Rulin.'

But Thrarin, in finery and steel circlet, could not look into the eyes of Telphin, who stared up at the prince.

'Oh whelp, I have beaten steel when your father was unbearded. Once I sat beneath the throne of Thrúr, but now no longer. What I make may serve Men, but will not slay them.'

But Thrarin knew, and for it he wept inside, that Telphin was sore wounded in the mind, sore drawn and worn, and so he smiled, painfully.

'Your jests are fearful, Telphin. Take your ease, I have drink, I have a bed, I have music, and they are yours.'

Dwari was doing his best to keep up along the canals, though he was forced to push his way through. But he was unable to get more than a glimpse of the young dwarfs scarf-a Nogrodic pattern, probably. Perhaps for a moment the dwarf returned his glance.

He looked around to see if he could find his way back. This section of town was a mix of peoples-the proportions of the buildings were different, the colours and accents vivid. There were even a band of nomads from the East encamped in the square over there. Dwari was curious, and jostled his way back towards it. Not particularly good for customers, he thought sadly-the horse equipage and slashing swords were things that few Dwarves chose to make.

This district was cluttered with refugees-of numerous regions that now the Abhorred One ruled. It seemed there were no passing glances; either he was being ignored or stared at. It was strange not to be feared, admired, known.

When Dwari returned to the dwarf-hall and there saw a strange dwarf, well-into middle-age, who fulminated against Thrarin and the Broadbeams, though he showed sure signs of being one himself, filling his chair well. About him in a circle sat and observed the Dwarves of Tharbad, their colours each blazoning a distant fief. Who was this rude visitor? Thrarin was absent, but Gomin was able tell his master where the prince was.

Thrarin was standing at the narrow window in his room when Dwari found him.

'You saw.' '

I saw a fool.'

'That fool was, would have been, my master.'

'That was Telphin, then?'

'Yes, the master smith, the last descendant of Telchar, now thrown down. You have nothing to reign over here but mercenaries, and I must watch my-our knowledge-drain into the swamp.'

'What has become of him?'

'The Maker knows.'

'But I know why he is an exile, now,' Dwari smiled.

'How on earth will I be reconciled to such a reprobate!'

Dwari came back to see the darkening great hall and look upon his guest. The smith was lying there, but his eyes were open, and they tracked him as he approached.

'Come now, I owe you better quarters on my honour.'

The smith raised his torso up and so knelt

and looked still Dwari reached out and lifted with his youthful strength, raising the old dwarf to lean on him.

'I can make nothing' whispered Telphin, now in the throes of mead-laced melancholy.

'What?' asked Dwari.

'Nothing. I have not forged as much as a nail, not that does not break or blister or shatter as it cools. One prize have I made that will out-last me, one, and into that one I have put all my skill, but I would abandon it to whomever could get me those bands.'

Now the old dwarfs buried madness had cooled, though it lingered still.

'I will forge such a thing as to make the heavens churn, with their aid. See now this-this?' And he drew in the air a ring. But he closed his hand fast, a fist. And so Dwari left him lying on the cot, wondering. He would not say anything of this.

Thrarin took leave of his company that morning and to the three-span bridge he came, beneath which Telphin worked. And he smelled the fire and sighed. The bridge was cluttered with makeshift shops and tents. The sound of peddlers, crying out their 'Come Hither!' chant did not permit a silence. He came back to the hall unsatisfied.

They came that morning and found the smith gone. He had gone back to his workshop. In state Dwari sat, waiting and fretting while the Dwarven community presented their petitions and suits before him.

At long last, Dwari, his work done, stood up and ventured to his quarters. He waved off his guard and set down the bundles of documents and writs that he was to review.

There was something amiss-a second shadow by the wooden frame that displayed his armour.

Dwari looked there; it was the dwarf from the day before, that plied the canals alone. The dwarf was dressed as if amongst strangers, a hat and scarf and obscured his face and nondescript clothes, which bunched and billowed on a somewhat sparse build. Only the trail of some dark hair spilled into the light But the dwarf was not armed.

'Ho, stranger,' said Dwari.

'I have come to you with a boon to beg,' said the dwarf.

'There are proper times and places for that.'

'Are you a prince only upon the throne?'

'What manner of prince do you want? I have powers both dread and lenient.'

'Do you swear upon your beard that you will hear me out and remain in confidence?'

'Well, if you can do the same, and it means no dishonour.'

The other dwarf chuckled dryly, and took down her scarf. 'Ill swear upon my braids. I am Kúra, daughter of Telphin.'

Kúra was young, and Dwari wondered whence had come her mother, but he knew at once that she was the prize of which the smith had spoken. But he listened without asking questions.

'Well,' Kúra said, 'this is a strange request but I thought somehow you could help me meet it'

'A curious request?'

'My father and I have fallen into poverty, and so that we might live as he once did, he takes on work from strangers. Many people from around the city he has worked dwarf-smithing for.

'Now a month ago a man came, who offered my father fine things for a sword the like of Telchar's, my father's ancestor. How he knew of this bloodline he did not tell, but I saw and heard them talk.

'Surely the price must be dear to place such a weapon into Men's hands again,' said Dwari.

'But somehow the smithing has gone awry. And the more that my father miscasts, the more that he breaks in anger and the more he broods. My father is not a maker of swords-in peace he has won his skills! And I beg you, can you aid me?'

She clutched his arm, fear shadowing her face.

'This is a poor way to trouble a master smith, indeed,' said Dwari, 'I will find a sword that might suffice to draw out the buyer; and we shall take this mischief-maker to face justice. Dwarvish honour is staked here.'

So Kúra smiled and Dwari in his heart buried his misgivings. Such a strange and lovely dwarfess she was, a prize worth purchasing.

To Thrarin Dwari came, then. This dwarf-prince would have such a sword, relic of the heyday of Nogrod.

'Why will you need this sword, then?' asked Thrarin.

'I am bound not to say,' said Dwari. 'But it is for an honourable purpose, and it will return to you.'

'Well,' said Thrarin, 'I must trust you.' And Thrarin's servants Drár and Droni took out a long chest and opened it Within were swords of estimable lineage and sharpness, destined for the belts of Númenor.

'These are fine swords,' remarked Dwari, 'but I need something that will cause hearts to leap and kindle madness.'

Thrarin's face became somber. 'I have one such, for such as the side of the Prince of the Sea-kings, but a secret sword it is, Telchar fashioned, a blade for Greycloak, that treachery made his last.'

'You have this sword?'

'Yes, it was the whole purpose of this embassy.'

'I would see it.'

'It is impossible. I cannot give it up. It is not mine to surrender, but the trust of my kingdom.'

'Then I say to you, my cousin, as a free dwarf and a friend, you may impose on my honour and I will grant whatever boon you ask. Grant this of mine?'

Thrarin smiled. 'This I can do.' And he revealed the sword that was hidden in a plain scabbard beside him, a ghostly weapon, as full of night-terror as the secret dreams of Men.

And Thrarin became intensely curious for what purpose this sword was to be used, for good or ill.

So when Kúra came again the next day Dwari told her of the sword.

'It will entrance him, as you do me,' he said.

Kúra turned away. 'I owe you a fuller tale,' she said. 'Long have I wondered about the Dwarves without Tharbad, and even the folk here I have kept apart from. It is strange, I think, to live so lonely in the midst of a city, but ever my father has forbidden me to have truck with man or dwarf or elf. Now it seems I have broken that rule, for I do not know what to do.'

'How am I to aid.'

'I do not know; but it is rings that have bent his soul.'

'What are these rings?'

Now as they were speaking, Thrarin was pacing down the deep cellars, looking for Dwari and commiseration. And he trailed his hand in his young beard, coming down the stair, and then heard the voice of Kúra inside.

'When my father was a boy he heard secrets from the lips of the great smiths, including Narvi, who was his kin by marriage. Now Narvi, in those days, was one who moved from the Mansions to the lost City of the Elves at whim, having the trust and love of all.

'One such secret was the lost Rings, which no one speaks of now, but they were the purpose of a great work, a great secret work, which Celebrimbor died for, they would make the world anew and safe.

'Seven rings were forged to bear the dreams of Dwarves, and they were lost. This knowledge nestled in the memory of my father, and so he would tell, when he taught me his ways and his skills, of this, and always would it burn in his voice.

'A stranger came to him last year and offered two rings-one that matched, both in description and in secret virtues, that which my father had so desired for so long. But these rings were to be bought at great price. This price was the sword I have asked for, in part, but also the cost of my father's mind. For he did not only dislike the needfulness of weapon-craft but himself believed that the Maker had told him that a sword from his hands would slay him. But my father also fears that this stranger could sell the rings to another.'

'Didyou see the rings?' asked Dwari.

'Yes, briefly, and I can tell you of their shape.'

As he listened secretly to Kúra's words, Thrarin slipped from his hiding place near the door, and telling no one, sought out Telphin in his smithy.

Thrarin found the door to Telphin's smithy was barred: there was a man, sitting, his feet draped over the edge of the embankment.

The man stopped and looked back at Thrarin. His confidence and appearance was too solid to be a mere traveller. So Thrarin waited and the man came up to him.

'Sir dwarf,' he paused, 'there you are. I have found something in the river, and wish to sell it.'

'What do you take me for? a moneylender?'

'Oh-but the fisherman said that dwarf who lives here can do such exchanges.'

Thrarin thought and rejected a laugh. This mysterious dwarf this man spoke of was no doubt Telphin himself. But why would this traveller mistake him?

'What is it that you want me to look at?' asked Thrarin. Certainly he could profit by the stupidity of this fellow.

'Well, come with me.' The man was about to grasp Thrarin by the shoulder but thought better of it.

The man led him circuitously, but quickly, though the warrens of tenements and huts until they reached a crude tent Thrarin could hear a child crying inside. It was getting darker.

The fellow clambered inside and brought out a cloth. He unfolded it and revealed two rings, bound together with fine wire. They were silty and a little worn looking, but one was shining with a weird light like the glimmer of the moon on the snowy mountain tops. There was a stone, a cloudy, bluish one. The other's stone was dark, and translucent like a dirty diamond.

The man was hesitant and wouldn't let Thrarin touch it But the dwarf did get a good look at it.

'Well-they are old work,' said the dwarf. 'I can spare gold for them-their value in metal'

The man was suddenly earnest, but said little. Indeed he seemed to grow in stature and in danger. 'I think rather a sword will do, one that as the Sea-kings -wear.'

'But I have, as is wise, left my goods at my lodgings.' Thrarin could not wholly stifle his fear and interest. 'I can meet you again, at the three span bridge, tomorrow. This thing-where did you get this ?'

'In the river, down in the Swanfleet, where the old ruins are.' Then the Man smiled broadly, and crept away into the tent.

Thrarin left him and tried his best to get back towards the dwarf-hall. The shadows were dark and rising fast creeping up the buildings. When he came to the gates of the hall Thrarin passed a dwarf coming out, perhaps slighter than a male, and he knew it was Kúra under her scarf embroidered with the old signs of Telchar's line. But he did not say anything, but turned when she went watching her. What knowledge could be in her?

Thrarin found Dwari waiting for him in his chambers. 'I have come for the sword,' he said.

'I have changed my mind,' said Thrarin, 'the sword is too potent for such secret uses. Even I know that Belegost did not lend its blades at Sam Athrad.'

'Why do you dwell on the past -which is lost-I beg you, let me have it.'

But Thrarin was emboldened by the sight of the rings. 'I have made up my mind. There are lesser swords, but of equal sharpness, which you may readily take from your stores. Must I turn you away as a beggar?'

'Better a thief than a beggar,' said Dwari, taking his axe out. 'This blade is sharp enough to make my point-but no one will touch the captain of the dwarf-hall.'

Thrarin was full of fear at this betrayal. 'Take the sword, then. But you take my vengeance too.'

Dwari walked out with the sword in his hands. And Thrarin watched him go. Finally he succumbed to his rage and took his hammer and his shield and ran after him into the darkening night.

Following the directions of Kúra, Dwari made his way to her father's smithy. Soon he came to detect the scent of steel, down in the dark underside of the quarter, below the bridge. The dwarf walked down the narrow stair, into the dark, from which one could watch unseen. There they could see flickering light. The door was open. So Dwari watched in sight of the bridge, listening to the clamor of steel and feeling the heat leech into the dank air.

He was not long alone. For silendy came a man, his cloak a tatters, and his habit like a fisher, though his bearing was feral and tall. It was the seller of rings.

Out of the door came Telphin, and he was weeping, begging.

And then the ring-seller, as if from air, revealed a ring, and even from a hundred feet the ring gleamed and glowed, like the crescent moon, silver, or like the ringed eyes of wolves by night; but he cupped his hands so Dwari caught but a glimpse.

The smith sank to his knees, begging, but the seller denied him, and said something, and the smith turned back, leaving the door ajar. By the door the ring-seller waited, seated near it. His eyes turned to watch Dwari come and enter the hall.

Dwari entered into a strange delving. Half made from the stones above and half cut from a vast boulder, now the linchpin of the quarter-which flowered with towers and hovels from this solid earth. The little hall was well-made, and was homely. Along the walls was inscribed the pattern of Telchar s mark, the roof was carved with a sun setting and stars and moon rising, glimmering with *ithilnor* against the black stone.

The centre of the room was dominated by the forge-a small, individual forge, where the fire clattered and howled, its fumes vented into the street above (and into the floor of an enterprising bath-house).

But the furnishings and the walls were not new-they were worn and dirty-the beds were unkept, the kitchen cluttered and dusty.

The smith looked at him, and was suddenly moved to smile. Kúra stood beside him.

'My daughter says you can pay him. Give me the sword.'

Something made Dwari hesitate, but he handed the Man-sized sword to the smith.

'Would that such things are possible, but no longer-it makes me regret that I had not made it,' said the smith as he took the sword and admired it for a moment.

To the door he carried it. The ring-seller rose up in an ungainly fashion, his dusky face speckled by the flaming forge to look at the weapon.

Telphin delivered the sword from his hands.

The ring-seller took it into his hand, and with a single movement of the arm, drove the sword through mail and leathers into the heart of Telphin. Then he placed the rings, which seemed to illumine the clearing, into the dying Telphin's hand. The smith twisted his hand to his breast as he perished, as if to feel the wound and know it real.

'No!' shouted Kúra, bursting past Dwari to her dead father. But the ring-seller took hold of Kúra by the shoulder, still holding his bloody sword, and dragged her out of the hall.

Beside the embankment lay a leather river-boat With the stride of Men the murderer put off into the boat and slipped into the current, pulling the twisting form of Kúra through her father's blood.

'Khazad!' shouted Dwari.

'Khazad ai-menu!' exclaimed Thrarin, running down the bridge toward the smithy.

Thrarin held his hammer from his belt, and Dwari had an ancient axe, running forward, pursuing to the edge of the dark water.

Thrarin flung out his hammer, hitting the shoulder of the peddler, who crouched in the little boat as it went under the bridge. Kúra slipped from his grasp into the deep river. The wounded traveller slipped back into the boat and it drifted away, down into the dark away.

Kúra slipped from his grasp into the deep river. Dwari struggled into the river to save her, but he was no swimmer. Soon he felt her wrap her arm around his waist and drag him out to the shore.

There they sat, Dwari worn and tired from the water which had swum into his lungs, watching Thrarin watching them.

Thrarin spoke first. 'I will bring him to the Vale, to rest beside his ancestors.' He crouched by the dead smith and looked at the rings, wet with dwarf-blood. 'One of these is mine, if there is justice.' And he looked upon the dwarfess, shivering, with a dark intensity.

'What are these rings, Kúra-what had he bought?' asked Dwari.

The dwarf-maid was startled by the warrior's melancholy. She looked to see the rings, glowing softly. 'What is the use of a ring, Dwari, but to wear it?' she replied bitterly.

Dwari put the ring on his finger. The night seemed as sharp and dank, the stars

as distant, the voices of Men in their high houses, as near and incomprehensible. The slate Blue Mountains of the west, as ruinous, and dreaming as always.

In the east he could feel the weight of wealth; in the south, the sea and the new isle, closed and brilliant, sensible out of childhood tales. And somewhere he thought he felt walking a great tall power, and its eye was on him. His memories of whispered wealth and untapped riches spoken of by Dwarves with joy became in himself an emptiness, and it burned.

He could see Kúra and her confusion, her interest and her fate. She was the mistress of secrets she could impart, or deny, each one made of wealth, each one of making.

Now Thrarin took the other ring, and held it, and he likewise wore it. In the river beside him he scented the grains of gold that through Durin's grasp have slipped; he could feel the hammer he had thrown tumbling along the weedy bottom.

He could remember the tales of the cut and glamour of the elf-jewels when first Thrar had seen them, as if awakened were the dead dreams of Nogrod, shattered.

In the north he could almost the taste unforged iron, thinly prospected by travelling Dwarves, in a maw of hills; and the shuddering scaly hide of imprisoned beasts, each crevice clotted with dulled and unwoken jewels.

And he looked upon Kúra and her secrets with a rapt attention.

So Kúra lay, her arms around her dead father, and she beheld the wonder and the trouble in these rings, and the fire in the eyes of Dwari, who she loved, and Thrarin, who she now feared.

'Cast them into the river!' she implored.

'Well, they are yours,' said Dwari, hesitating.

Dwari wandered to the bank beyond her sight, but took up instead a stone and cast it so that it splashed and sank away, all the while whilst Thrarin watched him and said nothing. Then the two princes returned to see Kúra sitting there.

What will you do?' asked Thrarin. 'I will leave Tharbad.'

'Make right your oath, Dwari, and I will forget this night.'

'How is it to be made right, Thrarin?'

'I will wed Kúra, and unite her secrets again to the heirs of Thrar.'

Dwari was quiet.

'No,' he said.

In time the prince Dwari returned with his wife Kúra to rule Nornhabar, the delving of the Firebeards, now ascending. In a few short years the halls of Nornhabar shone with gold, their gifts and goods enriched the households of the Dúnedain, their spearheads and their axes borne by a thousand Gwathuirim.

But Thrarin returned, full of ruth, to the Vale of the Dwarves. There he sat apart, and pondered the loss he had suffered, and the broken boon. And one day he left, his company of kinsmen and blood-brothers sworn to secrecy, to go south.

There they came to Nornhabar, sending for the prince. And Dwari did not dare tell the king what mission they were about, but kissed his infant son and gave him a ring on a cord to wear. Then he told Kúra of what will come.

So he came forth from Nornhabar and was slain by a dozen Dwarves, and he spoke not a word.

The Firebeards rose up and took weapons; and the king raised the standard for war. But his daughter-in-law came to him as he brought out his weapons. Whatever words she said are not known.

Then she came out alone, with her son.

Thrarin and his men stood around the corpse of her husband.

'I have killed Dwari in bloodfeud. I say to you, who gave your heart to him, that he was not true, for even before he broke his promise to me, he gave to the river no ring. Indeed, look upon the ring there that your child dangles with his hand.' And it was true, there was a ring there.

'So he has, Thrarin. But you cannot have me, and what of your ring, which my father bought in blood?' she said.

'I offer you peace, Kúra daughter of Telphin. I offer you my hand. I will not bear a grudge against your son. Deliver him to his grandfather.'

'Here is your answer,' and she took off her princely circlet. 'I will not see you again, and will have naught to do with the thrones of Dwarves. My son and his sons will not sit on one, nor shall they be raised to secret vengeance. Enough of this bargain. I shall hide both ring and child away, forever, for they are mine both by right, whatever my husband was.'

So Thrarin returned empty-handed, and he died childless. His nephew succeeded him. What became of the son of Dwari, no one knows, but red-bearded smiths and warriors were known in the halls of Khazad-dûm, and they were sometimes accounted noble, before the coming of Durin's Bane.

Nornhabar fell into ruin. In grief the old king died, and into the world the scattered Firebeards came, for the veins of wealth and comity they tapped had failed. Today they are a seldom met folk, at least by Men.

Telchar's sword passed into the secrets of legend, and wherever it was found, misfortune followed.

Old dwarf! He lived alone,
No wife, no slaves
His house is carved from stone
River-rocks he pays
A tinpenny for,
To eat with peas, and mead
no more.

RASTARIN'S LOG

CHAPTER SEVEN: YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS TO IMPRESS ME

When Rastarin wakes up, she finds herself in the dungeons of Castle Mírlond with a very irritating old man for a cellmate and a splitting headache. She stands up and staggers to the door, feeling the acute symptoms of scrumpy withdrawal.

"Guard! Guard!" she cries, and after some grumbling a fat, balding, bare-chested man, obviously the dungeon torturer, waddles over to the door and looks in. "What do you want?" he demands rudely.

"I want to speak to Arkhâd," she orders, in no mood to be patient. But the jailer only laughs and spits in her face.

"You'll get to see Arkhâd alright," laughs the torturer, "he's presiding over your trial and execution tomorrow morning!"

The Drowning Duck sails into Mírlond on Úrui 23rd, where Lytta and Tarassis are shocked to learn that Rastarin is to be executed in a big public spectacle on the following day. Both the Arangwil and the Black Serpent are already in port; Captain Hardon is clearly eager to rub in the fact that the Dread Pirate failed to show up for their planned duel on the 24th. Although not entirely averse to the idea of celebrating Rastarin's execution herself, the spectral Oathbreaker nevertheless makes her way down to the dungeon of Castle Mírlond and presents her erstwhile ally with a set of stolen keys.

"Lytta! I knew you wouldn't take all that killing each other stuff personally. But — what's happened to you?"

"I'm dead," Lytta replies. "But there's no time to explain. I have to get you out of here!" That proves to be none too simple, as Rastarin insists on recklessly attacking any guards they come across in revenge for her imprisonment and scrumpy deprivation.

At last they make it outside. Shielding her eyes from the dazzling sun, Rastarin beholds a large enclosed courtyard dominated by a single gallows pole. Since this has clearly been constructed for her benefit, she has no qualms about cutting the noose and using it to lasso the castle battlements and scale the wall. Lytta joins her as guards burst into the courtyard behind them, but despite the danger, Rastarin cannot resist pausing at the parapet to taunt her pursuers with the 'dread fist of justice' and certain unrepeatable insults. With a cry of triumph she leaps over the battlements, intending to rappel down the outer wall, but instead she slips and falls the whole thirty feet, breaking her leg.

Lytta sweeps her up with preternatural strength and flees into the city, where they fortuitously meet Konar and are taken to a 'safe house' where Clennan is poring over plans of the fortress. "We've been planning your escape for days!" Konar explains.

Lytta does what she can for Rastarin's injured leg while her friends fill her in on the news. To Rastarin's delight they were able to recover her weapons, and Lytta and Clennan hold two pieces of the Karajaz (the third, unfortunately, is still with Herod). Rastarin in turn relates all she can remember of Sangahyandion's death and her strange encounter with Irusan.

"It's funny how those little pacts with the devil can come back to haunt you," observes Lytta. She hands over Rassimus' locket, and Rastarin falls silent, realizing how much her recklessness has cost them all.

Night has now fallen in Mírlond, and despite massive scrumpy consumption the adventurers remain unsure of their next move. Lytta wants to destroy Herod, Nubjub, and the whole cabal, but Rastarin argues that an attempt should first be made to win over Arkhâd, whom she insists is really noble at heart.

"And I'm sure your concern has nothing to do with the possibility he'll be the next King of Gondor, and is — dare I add — still single," Lytta remarks wearily, but nevertheless agrees to deliver Rastarin's letter to Arkhâd at Castle Mírlond.

To my dear friend and kinsman,

You are no fool, Arkhâd. Do you ready believe that of all the ways in which I could have killed your brother, somehow I chose the method that would most surely point to my own guilt? Irusan slew Sangahyandion because he could not be corrupted. Would that you were half the man he was! But there it it still a chance I can save you. Leave the castle tonight, and a friend will bring you to me. You have become a victim of your own cabal, Arkhâd, and a mere puppet in Irusan's machinations. If you do not have the courage to resist this evil, then you have no right to wear the Elendilmir.

Lytta entrusts the letter to one of the fortress guards with strict instructions to bear it directly to Arkhâd, but her wait outside the castle gates is fruitless and she eventually returns to the others. It is now almost midnight, and the debate continues as they ponder various unlikely schemes for doing away with Herod and Zimrakhil.

"If you'd attacked him on the Arangwil when we had the chance, we wouldn't be in this mess now!" cries Lytta in frustration.

"Oh yes," Rastarin answers sarcastically. "I suppose I should have just kept him distracted with my exploding head while you stabbed him in the back!"

The futility of trying to outwit the two sorcerers becomes more and more apparent, and Rastarin's irritation grows as the argument continues. "I'm not going to slink out of here with my tail between my legs," she says at last. "Rastarin had an appointment with Captain Hardon on the 24th, and Rastarin keeps her appointments. Let's hit

them now in the way they least expect: with a full frontal assault!"

While our heroes slip out of town to where TCBS lies anchored in a hidden cove, the fortress of Mírlond is in an uproar over Rastarin's mysterious escape. Captain Hardon is throwing all his energies into the hunt for her, sending out troops to scour the city, and putting up posters: "Wanted, Dead or Alive for Questioning..." There is still time, however, to do a bit of catching up with his old pal Zimrakhil.

"Herod, I'd like you to meet my DEAR friend Captain Hardon," says Zimrakhil.

"Sir, your reputation precedes you," says Herod.

"Indeed it does," adds Zimrakhil meaningfully. At the door to Hardon's room he turns to Herod, saying, "I'm afraid that this is something I've got to do alone." The door is closed in Herod's face, leaving him to ponder the mingled sounds of pleasure and pain.

"Oh Zimrakhil," says Hardon, "After we get Rastarin, let's spend a whole week together, just the two of us."

"Yes, yes!" Zimrakhil replies. "YES!"

After some time, Herod knocks politely on the door, and then louder.

"What do you want?" demands Zimrakhil in a strained voice.

"When are you coming out of there, Zimrakhil?" asks Herod. "I need to talk to you."

"I'm a little bit tied up right now," shouts Zimrakhil, who is hanging bound to the wall as Hardon whips him. But Herod persists, and eventually Zimrakhil opens the door, looking somewhat flustered.

"What was so important that you couldn't wait FIVE MORE MINUTES?" he exclaims.

Just then a huge explosion reverberates throughout the city as one of the guard towers on the harbour mole goes up in a massive blast of naurnen, sending a brilliant pillar of fire into the sky.

"That'll be the front doorbell," says Herod gloomily. "Rastarin! It's her!" shouts Hardon.

The night is calm and the winds are steady as TCBS comes due east across the sea to attack the harbour of Mírlond, two giant ballistae positioned on her bow. A regular ballista ball demolishes the small boat that is attempting to carry a chain across the harbour entrance, and a second shot — of naurnen — turns one of the guard towers at the entrance into a column of flame. TCBS comes into range of the second tower before the ballistae are re-loaded, but her crew is prepared and she slips into the harbour undamaged. Captain Hardon brings the Black Serpent out to meet her as a large crowd begins to gather on the docks. From the wheel at the stern, Rastarin (suitably tanked up with scrumpy) trains her eyeglass on the Black Serpent and smiles.

"The Dread Spoon of Justice is coming, Hardon!" she cries, and TCBS tacks into the wind to line up her ballistae with the oncoming galley. Suddenly a black dove, one of Zimrakhil s foul familiars, lands on her eyeglass bearing a message. The note, which is indeed from Zimrakhil, is brief:

My dear Captain Rastarin: as you can see, we are proceeding with our side of the agreement. Now you proceed with yours. I remain, as always, by your command.

Z.

Rastarin crumples the message and puts it in her pocket; the next ball of naurnen is now ready to go, and it scores a direct hit on the Black Serpent. Hardon launches two missiles at once as TCBS wallows in the dead air of the close reach, unable to pick up speed to manoeuvre. One ball misses, but the other is coming down directly above the bow. Realizing what will happen if it explodes near the remaining loaded ballista, Rastarin orders it to be fired at once, and by a lucky chance this also hits the Serpent, blowing the galley apart. But Hardon s missile lands on her own bow a moment later, destroying both ballistae. TCBS is also taking damage from regular shot from the remaining guard tower, but now cannot answer fire. Rastarin brings her about, trying to pick up the crosswind to get them out of the harbour as swiftly as possible.

As TCBS limps through the harbour entrance, the crew begins to hear a deep roaring sound in the distant ocean, as if a great wave were building momentum far out to sea. Within minutes a vast water spirit surrounds them, and TCBS begins to spin as if caught in a whirlpool. Water shoots up through the deck hatches as the entire hull begins to break apart and sink. Clennan and the crew swim to the safety of the breakwater, but all else aboard Rastarin's beloved ship is lost.

Channelling her power to manifest corporeal strength, Lytta seizes Rastarin from the wreckage and flies over the breakwater.

"Take me to the Arangwil!" Rastarin shouts, but Lytta says it is too far.

"People are drowning. I need to go back and save them!"

"Saving the Karajaz is more important than any human life!" argues Rastarin.

"Speaking of which, you must rescue the other piece — I mean Clennan!"

Smiling, Lytta drops Rastarin into the sea just past the breakwater, ignoring her cry of, "don't drop me, I've got a broken Ieeeeeeeg!"

Preoccupied with his attempts to revive an almost-drowned Captain Hardon, Zimrakhil does not notice when, sometime later, the bedraggled Captain of TCBS hauls herself over the Arangwil's stern and limps purposefully down the deck. The Arangwil's crew fall back before her expression of murderous rage, and in the sudden silence Zimrakhil looks up to see Rastarin standing over him brandishing cutlass and naurnen.

"Am I invited to this party, or is it just between girl-men?" she enquires.

"Rastarin!" splutters Hardon, trying to get to his feet. "Rastarin! I've been waiting for this for a long time!" He tries to charge her, but Zimrakhil intervenes.

"What right do you have to board my ship. Captain Rastarin?" he demands.

"None!" she answers, "except perhaps that a little bird whispered in my ear that you had met your side of the agreement in arranging this duel, and now I am here to honour mine!"

"What?" asks Hardon, looking from Rastarin to Zimrakhil in confusion.

Rastarin pulls the sodden piece of paper out of her pocket.

"Zimrakhil and I made a deal to do away with you, Hardon. It was to be a duel of honour." She looks darkly at Zimrakhil. "Until Zimrakhil here — or should I say Irusan? —framed me for the murder of Sangahyandion and destroyed my ship with sorcery!"

"Sorcery?" exclaims Zimrakhil. "I don't know what you re talking about, Captain! I've never heard of anyone called Irusan. And just because you got it into your head to kill the Prince — "

"By the Valar, Zimrakhil, I wanted to marry him, not murder him!" shouts Rastarin. "But you — I know your game. You are a member of the cabal and servant of Irusan. Hold up your wrist!" (Zimrakhil holds up his gloved hand, smiling).

"Both of them!"

Zimrakhil holds up his other hand, but it

is covered by the sleeve of his robe. "Once more you are mistaken, Rastarin. I serve no one but myself," he says smugly.

Captain Hardon can barely contain himself during this strange conversation.

"My ship! I lost forty of my crew!" he snarls, raising his cutlass.

"Prepare to DIE, Rastarin!"

"Oh shut up, Hardon," Rastarin replies. "I beat you fair and square, and everyone knows it. Just listen to the crowds chanting my name!" They all pause and listen for a moment, but nothing is heard from the shore above the general commotion. Captain Hardon is really losing his cool by this stage.

"ARE YOU GOING TO FIGHT ME OR WHAT?!"

"Please, please," soothes Zimrakhil with mock concern. "Why don't you two young ones just go and have some wild sex together, and get it out of your system?"

Hardon sneers at Rastarin with contempt. "Her kind don't amuse me."

"Yes," she laughs, "I suppose Captain Ramrod was more to your liking. Although I must say that I myself was not so impressed with his performance — " (Hardon's rage is visibly building, so that he looks just about to explode) "...and then there was Gedron, the Laughing Reaver. He amused me for a while, but he was not as great as I'd been led to expect — "

"DIE!" shouts Hardon, charging with his cutlass. Rastarin side-steps and hurls her bottle of naurnen at Hardon's feet, instantly engulfing him in flame. After a few seconds of flailing and screaming his charred corpse falls to the deck.

"Now he really is flaming," she observes.

"I suppose that was what you pirates consider an honour duel," says Zimrakhil calmly. "Now, you spoke of sorcery?" As the fire subsides, the hilt of Hardon's cutlass begins to glow, and a wispy, shadowy substance emerges from it and begins to take shape. Zimrakhil is evidently neither unduly surprised nor afraid of the huge shadow creature that now materialises, its red eyes shining crimson beams across the deck. Balmet has returned—only now its target is Rastarin!

Lytta, who has been hovering invisible overhead, flies down and snatches Rastarin from the deck where she stands frozen with terror. The shadow creature can pursue them through the air, so they dive into the water. But Lytta's spirit form quickly loses substance in the deep, and Rastarin finds herself alone after a few seconds. She swims under the Arangwil and struggles to climb back on board just as Balmet turns corporeal and plunges into the sea in pursuit.

"Zimrakhil, save me!" she cries, barely hanging on as one of Balmet's huge claws hacks down through the railing beside her, tilting the whole ship.

"I can't BELIEVE you, Rastarin," Zimrakhil complains. "You bring this beast here to destroy my beautiful ship, and now you're asking me for favours!"

Just then another claw lands on the deck, smashing through the timber as the Arangwil begins to keel over. As Balmet heaves onto the deck Rastarin hurls her last bottle of naurnen down its throat, but cannot prevent herself from sliding in the same direction. At that moment Lytta suddenly returns, seizing Rastarin's hands and sweeping her up into the sky. Balmet roars fire and heaves its huge body into the air after them, but this form does not have the power of flight. Balmet's claws snap closed on empty air as its huge bulk falls down on top of the Arangwil, engulfing both ship and sorcerer with its massive haunches. From high above, Lytta and Rastarin watch as Zimrakhil's beautiful pleasure yacht shatters and sinks.

"Thanks, Lytta," says Rastarin. "We still have a chance to save Arkhâd. Let's go to the fortress!"

"And kill Herod," Lytta adds grimly.

As they fly over Castle Mírlond, they catch sight of Herod standing alone and surveying the harbour from one of the high open courtyards. Far behind and below them, Balmet is swimming across the sea in pursuit. They land beside him, and Rastarin and Herod greet each warmly as Lytta stands by, ignored except for a suspicious glance from Herod.

"I hope you got my letter, Herod," says Rastarin, "and that you never had any doubts about my loyalty to our agreement. As you can see, I am here to fulfil my obligations."

"Of COURSE, my dear. I always knew you would return to me—in some form or other."

"Well, the good news is that I have found out about the power of the Elendilmir. Any true descendant of Elendil may harness it, so it works for me too. Come, if you give me the Elendilmir now I can show you. Where is it?" she asks, trying to keep the urgency out of her voice.

"Oh, I believe it's in a safe place," Herod replies with a languid smile. At that moment, Balmet arrives at the castle and begins roaring and tearing huge chunks of masonry out of the walls as it attempts to climb up to where Rastarin stands. Rastarin and Herod continue their conversation.

"Irusan framed me, Herod. I didn't really kill Sangahyandion, you know," she says.

"I never dreamed for a moment that you did!" replies Herod with mock surprise.

"But you did kill me!" says Lytta, stepping forward. Herod looks at her with distaste.

"I guess you two have a lot to talk about," says Rastarin. "Well, I'll just leave you to it, if you tell me where I can find Arkhâd and the Elendilmir."

Just then one of Balmet's huge fists crashes through the wall of the courtyard behind them.

"I'd rather not talk to her now," Herod sniffs, as the entire wall behind him shatters.

"Herod, if you don't mind," says Rastarin, indicating Balmet. "Do me a favour and please call off your friend?"

Of course, certainly," he replies, with a wave of his hand. "Go back to whence you came, Balmet. You are dismissed." Balmet gives a final great roar and then dissipates in a cloud of dust from the fallen masonry and rubble. Herod turns to Lytta and scowls. "It was YOU who attacked ME, if you remember, that night you tried to ambush my poor little Nubjub. I'm only doing what I have to do."

"So am I!" answers Lytta, and launches her spirit attack against him.

Rastarin sees what is happening but is torn between her desire to help Lytta and her fear of the consequences if they should fail. But a moment later the contest is over, and Lytta vanishes.

"What did you do to her!?"

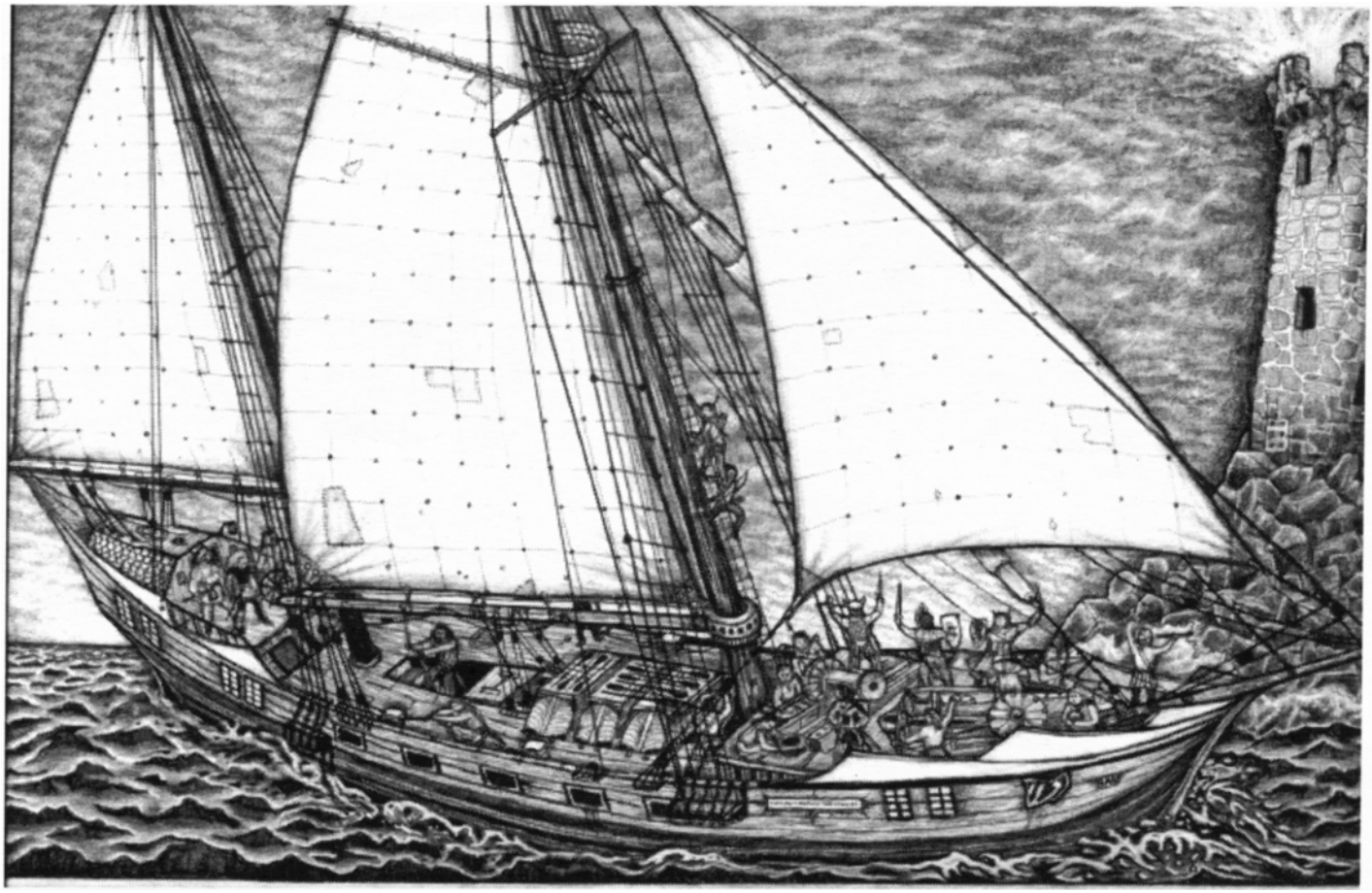
"Oh, I banished her back to the Paths of the Dead, where she belongs. She won't cause us any further trouble."

Rastarin takes a moment to recover her composure, but steels herself to remain civil.

"Take me to Arkhâd," she says. Herod leads her into the castle, into a large hall — where they behold Arkhâd lying dead upon the floor in a pool of blood. He appears to have been run through with his own sword, and he no longer wears the Elendilmir.

"No! What happened?" cries Rastarin.

"I believe he received a distressing letter," says Herod with feigned sadness. "He must have taken his own life."



Rastarin kneels beside Arkhâd and searches his clothing briefly, but does not find the Elendilmir. Something else catches her eye, however:

Sangahyandion's signet ring, the hereditary karma seal of the house of Castamir. Rastarin removes it from Arkhâd's hand and places it upon her own. Herod raises an eyebrow. "That was a bold move, Rastarin," he comments, but she ignores him. Finally she stands.

"TCBS and the Arangwil are lost, but Konar's Master Seawolf can get us out of here and back to Umbar. If you gather your things now, we can go."

Sauntering arm-in-arm through the huge wake of destruction left by Balmet, Rastarin, Herod, and Nubjub soon reach the docks, where the Master Seawolf awaits them. Clennan hails them from the stern; he has succeeded in gathering together all the survivors from TCBS, and Konar's crew is already preparing to depart. Their passage to the ship is intercepted, however, by a lone figure who draws his sword to Herod's throat. The sorcerer seems vaguely amused by the gesture. "And who might you be?" he inquires.

"You know very well who I am!" growls Tarassis. "What have you done to Lytta?"

Rastarin steps quickly between them, holding up her hands. "Tarassis, please. This is not the sort of problem that can be solved with swords!" But Tarassis angrily shoves her aside and lunges at Herod.

The sorcerer lifts his hand casually and Tarassis freezes, unable to strike.

Slowly, inexorably, the trembling blade begins to turn towards Tarassis' own heart. Rastarin finally decides that enough is enough.

"Konar! Clennan! Help me!" she cries, drawing her cutlass and slashing at Herod. In the general melee that follows, Tarassis breaks free of the spell and cuts Herod's head off, while Konar makes a bloody end of the disgusting Nubjub.

"The Dread Spoon of Justice has Triumphed!" shouts Rastarin, administering to Herod a long-overdue exocularization. "Let it be known that Rastarin kept her bargain with Captain Hardon!" But there are no answering cheers from Mírlond, which now looks more like a pile of rubble than a prosperous harbour town. Tarassis gives Rastarin a look of undisguised hatred before stalking off into the night.

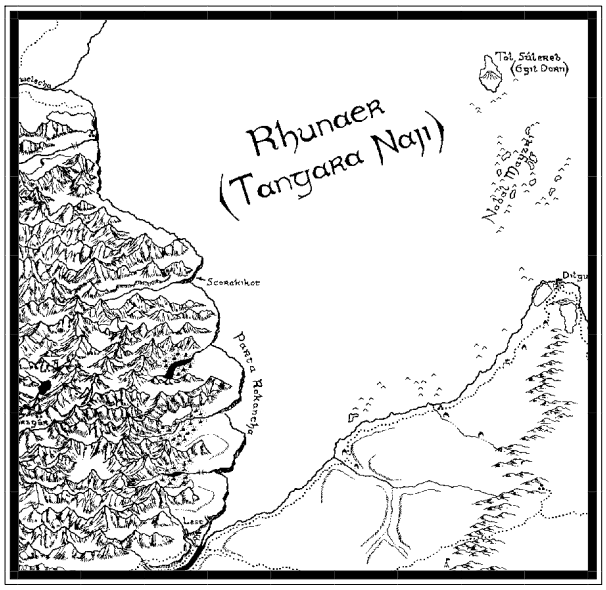
As the Master Sea-wolf casts off, they search Herod's belongings and recover his piece of the Karajaz, but no Elendilmir. The third piece of the Karajaz that was in Lytta's care is now also lost beyond mortal reach. "So the Elendilmir is gone for good, and the pieces of the Karajaz seem doomed never to be together in the same place," Rastarin sighs. "How am I ever going to get the Gwaedhel-sword now?"

"Still, a successful night's work, eh Captain?" grins Konar, gesturing to the flaming destruction that surrounds them.

"No," she replies, looking down at Arkhâd's signet ring. "It was a disaster."

And so the Master Seawolf departs Mírlond, through the sad wreckage of the three finest ships in Middle-earth, and sets sail for the open sea. Rastarin and Clennan, the only survivors of the ill-fated fellowship, take a big swig of scrumpy and wonder what to do next...

NÚMENOR MAP (OHS2) Exquisitely rendered by cartographer Thomas Morwinsky, this 36" x 39" (1" = 20 miles) black & white map of Númenor is a must for Middle-earth campaigns set in the Second Age!



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